

## Pillars of Salt (Pillars of Sand)

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/39031752) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/39031752>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Dream SMP</a>
Relationships:	<a href="#">Ranboo &amp; Toby Smith</a>   <a href="#">Tubbo &amp; TommyInnit</a> , <a href="#">Clay</a>   <a href="#">Dream &amp; GeorgeNotFound &amp; Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Alexis</a>   <a href="#">Quackity/Karl Jacobs/Sapnap</a> , <a href="#">Wilbur Soot &amp; TommyInnit</a> , <a href="#">Clay</a>   <a href="#">Dream &amp; TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Clay</a>   <a href="#">Dream &amp; Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Cara</a>   <a href="#">CaptainPuffy/Niki</a>   <a href="#">Nihachu</a> , <a href="#">Toby Smith</a>   <a href="#">Tubbo &amp; TommyInnit</a> , <a href="#">Ranboo &amp; Toby Smith</a>   <a href="#">Tubbo</a> , <a href="#">Ranboo &amp; TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Clay</a>   <a href="#">Dream &amp; Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Alexis</a>   <a href="#">Quackity/Sapnap</a> , <a href="#">Alexis</a>   <a href="#">Quackity &amp; Sapnap</a> , <a href="#">Technoblade &amp; Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF)</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Toby Smith</a>   <a href="#">Tubbo</a> , <a href="#">Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Clay</a>   <a href="#">Dream (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Wilbur Soot</a> , <a href="#">Alexis</a>   <a href="#">Quackity</a> , <a href="#">Niki</a>   <a href="#">Nihachu</a> , <a href="#">Cara</a>   <a href="#">CaptainPuffy</a> , <a href="#">Luke</a>   <a href="#">Punz</a> , <a href="#">Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Sam</a>   <a href="#">Awesamdude</a> , <a href="#">Grayson</a>   <a href="#">Purpled (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Fundy (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Noah Brown</a>   <a href="#">Foolish Gamers</a> , <a href="#">Charlie Dalglish</a>   <a href="#">Slimecicle</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Alternate Universe - Fantasy</a> , <a href="#">Magic</a> , <a href="#">Friendship</a> , <a href="#">Found Family</a> , <a href="#">Swearing</a> , <a href="#">Platonic Relationships</a> , <a href="#">Canon Relationships</a> , <a href="#">Revolution</a> , <a href="#">a few of those actually</a> , <a href="#">Hurt/Comfort</a> , <a href="#">Angst and Humor</a> , <a href="#">i like a good balance</a> , <a href="#">Manipulative Clay</a>   <a href="#">Dream (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Wilbur Soot and TommyInnit are Siblings</a> , <a href="#">they're the ones who wrote it in</a> , <a href="#">i'm just running with it</a> , <a href="#">Plot</a> , <a href="#">Work In Progress</a> , <a href="#">Tags May Change</a> , <a href="#">this one is for the bench trio fans</a> , <a href="#">and for the fans who think c!dream team is painfully underexplored</a> , <a href="#">Not RPF</a> , <a href="#">no beta we die like c!ranboo</a> , <a href="#">fly high king</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-05-17 Updated: 2022-06-15 Words: 22,902 Chapters: 9/?

# Pillars of Salt (Pillars of Sand)

by [HeartVex](#)

## Summary

*“What if,” asked Dream, green eyes gleaming feverishly, “we were king?”*

-

*One night Wilbur came home with a shiny gold ring and pressed it into Tommy’s hands.*

*“If we were royalty,” Wilbur had said almost reverently, “we’d have loads of stuff like this.”*

-

A revolution fails with a bang. Wilbur disappears.

In which Tommy is left behind to search for a missing brother, Tubbo is willing to follow his best friend to the end of the world, and an unknown voice haunts Ranboo at night. Sapnap, once loyal to his own best friend, begins to doubt.

## Notes

Whew boy. This is gonna be a long author's note, but I want to establish some things before we begin.

The first thing I want to say is that I am so very painfully American. Two out of three of my main characters are British. Dialogue is usually my strong suit, but to be completely honest I have no idea how these people talk. I tried to stay away from slang and keep the contents of their dialogue in character, but I have no idea if it sounds right. I tried my best.

I focus on platonic relationships. Even though I include canon romance, it can be read pretty much entirely as gen (basically like how it is in canon, except maybe a tad bit more explicitly romantic in serious contexts). I have tagged all the characters that show up even once. Some of them don't show up until much later, and some of them only come in for a few scenes. If you're hoping for SBI you'll get it, just maybe not in the way you might expect. They're pretty much in character with their DSMP lore selves. If I wanted to fuck with you guys I'd tag the 4/4 relationship, but I'm much too nice for that.

The rating may change. Right now it's sitting at teen with a lot of swearing, but I haven't started writing the truly serious parts yet and I'm not sure how dark I'll go with those. I'll try to keep things in line with how serious they get in canon (which is actually pretty dark when you put it down on paper instead of Minecraft roleplay). I do have an ending planned and a rough draft with about 20K words written so far. I'm expecting this to end up around 30K-40K words. My writing style is pretty concise and dialogue heavy. Basically, a lot happens in very few words. I think this makes it an easy read. Hopefully my pacing isn't too fast.

If you notice typos or any sentences that are worded poorly, feel free to point them out! However, please don't tell me if you dislike my characterization or plot choices. Fanfiction by its nature is self-indulgent first and foremost. If you have your own ideas about these things, write your own fanfiction!

Title comes from Viva la Vida by Coldplay. This happened because my friend (mortal enemy) PJ said I could use lyrics from Fallen Kingdom when I said I had no idea what to title it. She wanted credit for this idea so I am giving it to her. Shout out to her in general because she has listened to me talk about writing this from start to finish.

**THIS IS NOT RPF! CHARACTERS AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE BASED ENTIRELY ON THE DREAM SMP STORY!**

I'll tag warnings like this before each chapter.

**CHAPTER WARNINGS: minor blood**

I hope you guys enjoy!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

Our story begins, as all the curious ones do, with a band of unlikely friends.

The first of the three, George, was the heir to a house of nobility twice removed from the crown. He was of average height and average build, awkward glasses perched on his nose. As the oldest of the three, you'd expect him to be the leader. In reality, George was much more inclined to follow. His days were made up of leisurely naps and watching his friends pull elaborate schemes. The only thing special about George was that he was magic – if he wished it, his presence made others drowsy.

Sapnap was the youngest of the three. He was not nobility, but he came from a family of blacksmiths that worked closely with the royal guard. He spent a lot of his days in the well-off neighborhoods of L'manberg, delivering prized swords and shields to their rightful owners. He was about the same height as George, but a lifetime spent working in the forges helped him put on more muscle. He usually had his dark hair tied back from his face with a scrap of cloth. Sapnap was magic too. His family conversed with fire, and it listened. He inherited this gift.

Not much was known about their third. Even to Sapnap and George, Dream was a bit of a mystery. They did not know where he came from. He was obviously well off – his clothes were worn but clean, his hair was washed free from dirt, he smelled like the earth and the wind instead of the streets. There was a certain grace to the way he moved. He insisted he was not magic, but they were not quite sure if that was honest. He bested them in tests of agility, of strength, and of combat with ease. He was tall, with dirty blond hair and sharp green eyes. He was full of carefully contained, wiry strength. He was dangerous. He should have been dangerous. Instead, he spent his days running across rooftops with Sapnap and napping in fields with George. He helped them pull pranks on the upper nobility, laughing with them as they were chased away with the threat of swords. Sometimes, he'd get oddly distant, staring at George with a contemplative look on his face. Sapnap would joke about him being in love with George, and Dream would snap out of it with a laugh.

They were young. They were best friends. They were cheerful with the sort of happiness that could only come from having no worries.

The Dream SMP was a peaceful kingdom. The weather was mild. The soil was good for growing. The king was generous to the poor, putting more funds into feeding them instead of building a military. (This is something that he would later come to regret.) They were surrounded by ocean on three sides. Their only neighboring territory was known as the Badlands to the north. Wild, lawless, full of bandits and mercenaries for hire. Sometimes, Sapnap would passionately express their need for a stronger military presence at the border. Dream would agree wholeheartedly. George never expressed an opinion because, in all honesty, he didn't care.

L'manberg was the country's capital, located on a bay as far south from the border as one could go. It was the center of the country's trade, with a naval force to protect from invasion.

No one ever bothered though. The Dream SMP had a peaceful relationship with all the other kingdoms close enough to try. With their impressive agricultural economy, it was much more beneficial to trade with them than to try to invade.

Tensions in the country began to arise when bandits from the Badlands began to cross the border, pillaging and looting farms in the north. The king did nothing. No soldiers were sent to the north to protect the border. The attacks escalated. He soon went from being seen as a peaceful and benevolent king, to weak and spineless. Discussions between Dream and Sapnap about the king grew heavy and heated, both spitting their displeasure over what they saw as cowardice. George listened with wide eyes. Dream turned to him then, with that intense look on his face.

“What if,” asked Dream, green eyes gleaming feverishly, “*we* were king?”

George was the heir to a house of nobility twice removed from the crown.

This is where our story begins.

---

Tommy kept his gaze fixed forward and his stride purposeful as he made his way through the crowded street. The smell of wet cobblestone filled his nose as he splashed through puddles.

*“The trick to it,”* said Wilbur’s voice, ringing in his ears, *“is to look like you have someplace to be.”*

He pulled his woolskin coat tighter around his shoulders. At first glance, he blended with the upper-class citizens that lived in this area of the city. His coat was clean and expensive looking. His blond hair was mostly washed, though wet from the rain and unruly. A closer glance, however, revealed trousers torn at the knee and a tattered shirt underneath the coat.

His blue eyes scanned the crowd for an easy mark. He found a lady with curled hair and a powdered face digging through her purse. She left it unclasped as she pulled out a handkerchief.

Tommy made his way towards her, eyes focused on something just over her shoulder. They barely touched as he passed by, nimble fingers darting into her purse and closing around a pouch full of precious coins.

By the time she went to return her handkerchief to her purse, Tommy was already gone.

---

“How’d you do?” Tubbo asked when they reconvened back in the alleyway that’d become their temporary headquarters. Tubbo, the only constant in Tommy’s life, was his best and oldest friend. He wore a rumpled green shirt. His brown hair curled wet and wild from the rain. He made grabby hands towards Tommy, waiting for his friend to offer up his hard-earned (stolen) loot. Tommy shrugged off his coat and carefully folded it into his bag of meager possessions. Then he tossed Tubbo the bag of coins he’d snatched. Tubbo weighed it in his hands and whistled.

“Where’d you go to get this?”

“The upper class distract,” said Tommy, slinging his bag over his shoulder. “Rich people have better shit. I also feel less like of a prick stealing from them.”

Tubbo grinned, expression devious. “Great minds think alike,” he said. He held up a golden bracelet glittering with diamonds.

Tommy’s eyes widened. “Holy shit! Put that away!”

In this area of the city, they were much more likely to get pickpocketed than to be the ones doing the pickpocketing.

“Guess we have to go see Fundy after all,” Tubbo mused, shoving the stolen bracelet back into his pocket.

“Wow,” said Tommy. “First you were all like, ‘mehmehmehmehmeh it’s too dangerous, Tommy.’”

Tubbo kicked him in the shin. Tommy yelped and jumped away. “Ow!”

“If you know of another fence we can sell this shit to,” Tubbo countered with a scowl, “now would be the time to tell me.”

“Even if I did know,” said Tommy, “I wouldn’t tell you. I *want* to go talk to Fundy.”

Tubbo sighed. “It’s already dangerous enough being in the city. You *know* Fundy is more likely to sell us out to Dream than to tell us anything we don’t already know about Wilbur.”

Tommy’s nails dug into his palms as his hands curled into fists. “If Wil has been in L’manberg, Fundy will know. He’s got more informants than anyone else, and he’s also his son.”

“Yeah,” said Tubbo, throwing his own bag over his shoulder. “He’s his son. Who *hates* him. Besides, Wilbur is probably long gone if he isn’t dead.”

Tommy shot him a glare so fierce that Tubbo held up his hands in surrender. “Fine! Ask him! If Dream finds us and kills us, I get to blame you.”

---

Fundy was a fox hybrid with furry, white-tipped ears poking out from his unkept mop of hair on his head. He was facing away from the door, going through some papers behind the counter. His ears twitched as the bell on the door rang. "One second!" he called.

Tubbo and Tommy exchanged a glance, then looked around the store. Fundy's front was a rather unsuccessful pawn shop, which Tommy had always thought was the bit on the nose for a fence. Stacks of books sat accumulating dust on the shelves. Unpolished glass knickknacks found a home in a display case to Tommy's left. They were little statues of various animals. He grinned and shoved Tubbo on the shoulder.

"Look," he whispered, "it's a bee."

"Holy shit," Tubbo whispered back. "I want it."

"Oh." Fundy's voice made them both look up from the glass bee they were midway through stealing. "It's you two."

"Heyyyy Fundy," said Tommy nervously, casually leaning against the display case. "How's things?"

"Terrible," Fundy replied. "Stop stealing my shit."

"Sorry," said Tommy and Tubbo in unison.

---

They both followed him into the back room, where Fundy usually did his illegal sales. They exchanged the stolen bracelet for a pouch heavy with gold coins. Tubbo asked if he could have the glass bee. Fundy told him he could buy it if he wanted it.

"By the way," asked Tommy. "I was wondering-"

Fundy shook his head. "No. I don't know anything about Wilbur. No one's heard from him since the explosion. The bastard probably blew himself up."

"Has anyone found a body?" Tubbo asked.

Fundy laughed. "Does it matter? Dead is dead. He made a damn good hole in the castle though. They're still repairing it, you know."

"I'll find him," Tommy promised. He opened the pouch and flicked a gold coin in Fundy's direction. "For the bee."

Fundy caught it and sighed. "Leave. If someone pays me for it, I *will* tell them you were here."

---

“I’m sorry, Big Man,” said Tubbo apologetically. “I know that wasn’t what you wanted to hear.”

They were walking towards the main entrance of L’manberg. They had made a few stops on their way out. Tommy bought a new pair of trousers to replace his torn ones. Their packs were full of bread and cheese and dried meats. Tubbo had carefully wrapped his glass bee in cloth before placing it gently in the bottom of his bag.

“You were right!” said Tommy cheerfully. “Wilbur isn’t stupid. He wouldn’t come back to L’manberg.”

“Right,” Tubbo agreed.

“He’s still alive,” Tommy continued. “He’d hate to go out leading a *failed* revolution. He’s too much of a prick for that. He’d at least want to *win* before blowing himself up!”

Tubbo didn’t say anything for a moment. Tommy tried to ignore the way his heart sank. He *knew* Tubbo was skeptical of Tommy’s faith in Wilbur. He had been even before Wilbur had gone and ruined everything. But Tommy couldn’t help it. In his mind, Wilbur was *family*, and he had been for a long time.

Tubbo finally spoke. “Where are we going, Tommy? What do we do next? We can’t just keep hiding and stealing forever.”

Tommy grinned, because for once he had a plan. “Wil said that if everything went to shit, we should go to his dad for help.”

“Huh,” said Tubbo, scratching the back of his head. “I didn’t even know he had a dad.” Tommy decided to keep the fact that *he* hadn’t known until the day before the explosion to himself. “Where does he live?”

“Oh I have no idea,” said Tommy. “I don’t think Wilbur really knew either. But he told me who does.”

“Who?” Tubbo asked.

“Quackity!” Tommy informed him cheerfully. “We’re going to Las Nevadas, Big Man!”

---

Tommy and Wilbur were about as far from royalty as they could get, but Wilbur often dreamed of living in the castle. They stole enough to get by. Wilbur’s guitar paid for the rest.



He grew in popularity all across the city. Soon he had gigs in almost every tavern whenever he asked. Wilbur was magic. There was something strange about his voice. When he spoke or laughed or sang, you felt compelled to listen. They lived well enough, in a small cottage on the outskirts of the city. Sometimes Tubbo stayed with them. One night Wilbur came home with a shiny gold ring and pressed it into Tommy's hands.

"If we were royalty," Wilbur had said almost reverently, "we'd have loads of stuff like this."

Tommy held the gold ring up to the light of an oil lamp. "Did you steal this?"

"No!" Wilbur exclaimed. "I bought it as a reminder."

Tommy's brow furrowed. "A reminder of what?"

Wilbur's face contorted into a scowl. "That the king is *shit* and he doesn't deserve the throne. He's not even the one in charge."

Tommy blinked owlishly at him. It wasn't the first time he'd heard a rant from Wilbur about how King George didn't deserve his throne, but he'd never heard that one before. "Huh? Who is, then?" he asked.

"A prick," said Wilbur, "called *Dream*."

---

Tommy wore the ring on a cord around his neck carefully hidden underneath his shirt. It was only after Wilbur's disappearance that he learned it wasn't real. A scratch from dropping it revealed that the gold was painted on. It made sense, in hindsight. They hadn't had enough money to spend on gold.

A lot about Wilbur was beginning to feel like that lie.

Tommy and Tubbo were a few hours out from the city now. They chattered about nonsense as they walked, spirits high after successfully making some money without getting caught. They paused when they caught sight of a tall figure further down the road blocking their path. They paced anxiously back and forth, wringing their hands.

"Dude," said Tubbo, nudging Tommy with an elbow. "Have you ever seen anyone that tall before?"

Tommy squinted at the stranger. They *were* rather tall. Freakishly tall. Weird.

As if they could hear Tubbo, their head snapped upwards to look at the pair. There was a moment where they all stared at each other. Then the stranger approached. They only looked taller as they got closer.

Tommy could see now that they obviously weren't fully human. One side of their face was a deep black, the other a pale white. They had heterochromatic red and green eyes and a back hunched over with terrible posture. A tattered, black cloak wrapped around their shoulders. The hood was turned up and hid most of their hair, but Tommy could make out the barest hints of black and white curls peeking out from underneath. They seemed skittish, gaze frantically looking around. Tommy's hand went to the knife he kept strapped at his hip.

"Do you guys know where we are?" the stranger asked nervously. The voice was distinctly male, and unusually deep. He kept his distance, but Tommy's hand tightened on the hilt of his knife anyway.

"Um," said Tubbo, bemused. "Just a few hours north of L'manberg."

"Oh no," the stranger groaned. He raked his hands through his hair, pushing his hood off in the process, which revealed long, pointed ears. "Oh crap. Why am I so close? How did I get so close?"

Then his head jerked around to look somewhere behind Tubbo and Tommy.

"Shoot!" he shouted. They both watched as the strange man dove for the forest to the left of them.

"Um," said Tubbo again. "That was weird."

Then Tommy heard it – the familiar rumble of horse's hooves in the distance. He let out a string of curses, grabbed Tubbo's arm, and dragged him into the cover of the forest. They collided with the stranger who let out a strangled cry of surprise. Tommy clamped a hand over his mouth.

"Shut up!" he hissed.

The stranger nodded frantically, mismatched eyes wide and not quite meeting Tommy's. Tommy removed his hand from his mouth and pulled away. They dropped to the ground, disappearing into the forest undergrowth. The three of them stayed low, watching the road as the group of men on horses approached.

"Holy shit," Tubbo whispered. "That's *Sapnap*. Why is he *here*?"

The general of the king's army, Sapnap, sat atop his horse in the front of the group. With his hair tied back with his signature strip of white cloth, he was easy to identify. His armor gleamed with expensive enchantments. Tommy tried to stay as still and as silent as possible, which was difficult because he had a twig poking him in the ribs.

"Any sign of him?" Sapnap asked.

"No sir!" someone from the back of the group called out.

Sapnap sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "How hard can it be to find this guy? He's like eight feet tall or something."

Tommy and Tubbo exchanged shocked expressions, then looked to the stranger next to them, who looked like he was about to hurl.

“Oh well,” said Sapnap. “Dream’s not gonna be happy about this, but he’s gone. Let’s go back.”

With a raised hand as a signal, the group turned around to head back to L’manberg. Tommy counted to one thousand in his head once they were out of sight. Then he drew his knife and lunged for the stranger, grabbing him by the front of his shirt and pressing the blade against his neck. The stranger let out a panicked yelp, hands coming up next to his ears in surrender.

“Why is Dream after you?” Tommy growled.

“I don’t know!”

Tommy pressed the blade harder against his neck. Blood welled as it cut into skin. “Liar!”

The stranger let out a warbling cry. There was a strange *whoosh* and he disappeared, leaving only purple particles drifting in his wake.

“What the *fuck*!?” Tommy shouted.

“He’s an enderman!” Tubbo exclaimed. “Look over there!”

Tommy looked to where Tubbo was pointing. The guy was behind a tree a few feet away, peering around it to look at them.

“I really don’t know!” the stranger insisted. “I have a bad memory!”

“How do you forget something like that?” Tommy asked, incredulously.

“Um... It’s really bad?” said the stranger uncertainly. “Like I can’t even remember how I got here. Or where I’m supposed to go.”

“Do you remember your name?” Tubbo asked. “Maybe we’ve heard of you. Dream kind of has it out for us too.”

“You’re not gonna try to kill me again, are you?” he asked Tommy.

“I wasn’t trying to *kill* you!” Tommy shouted defensively.

“You *cut* me!”

“Guys,” said Tubbo, trying to get them back on track.

“Right,” said the stranger. He edged out cautiously from behind the tree, eyeing Tommy warily. “My name is Ranboo.”

Tommy and Tubbo exchanged a glance. Tubbo raised his eyebrows. Tommy scowled. They both turned back to Ranboo.

“We’ve never heard of you,” said Tommy, crossing his arms. Ranboo didn’t take his eyes off the hand still loosely holding the knife. “I don’t trust you. Leave.”

“Don’t be like that, Tommy,” Tubbo complained. “This is why we have no friends.”

“You know what,” said Ranboo, walking backwards. “I think I’ll just go. It was nice meeting you!”

“Wait!” Tubbo exclaimed. “We’re going to Las Nevadas, if you want to come with.”

“*What!?*” Tommy yelled. “He does *not* get to come with.”

Ranboo paused, a frown making his brows furrow. “Las Nevadas? That actually does sound familiar.”

Tubbo grinned brilliantly. “Maybe that’s where you need to go. It makes sense to go together! We’re fugitives on the run too!”

“No way!” Tommy protested.

Tubbo rolled his eyes. “What are we gonna do? Make him take a different road?”

Tommy spluttered indignantly. “What we *don’t* do is tell random strangers where we’re going! What happened to you being the cautious one!?”

Ranboo raised his hand. “Do I get a say in this?”

“No!” They both exclaimed in unison.

“Okay then.” Ranboo said. He looked from Tubbo to Tommy, who sighed and sheathed his knife.

“Fine.”

Tubbo cheered. He turned to Ranboo with a manic glint in his eye. Ranboo shuffled backwards nervously. “This is gonna be awesome! I’ve never met an enderman hybrid before!”

“Oh,” said Ranboo. “Oh no.”

# Chapter 2

## Chapter Summary

Sapnap reports back to Dream. Ranboo gets to know his two new companions.

## Chapter Notes

### **CHAPTER WARNINGS: blood, memory loss**

This is probably my least favorite chapter that I've written but I can't look at it anymore. Enjoy! (Or don't. I can't really make you.)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

To a first-time observer, the throne room inside the palace was impressive. A gilded, deep red carpet stretched from the entrance to the foot of the throne. Columns stood on either side of the carpeted path to support the lofty ceiling. Stained-glass windows cast rainbows of color against the polished marble floor. Lit torches lined the walls, burning constantly with the help of netherrack. Massive drapes hung next to the windows. In the center of the room stood the throne, elevated by a few steps from the rest of the floor. It was lined in gold, with red cushions to make sitting comfortable. In the throne sat King George, fast asleep with his knees curled up to his chest. His crown sat on a pedestal next to the throne.

On the steps sat Dream. His mask was pulled over his face. He used to always take it off in the presence of his oldest friends, but not anymore. He was focused on sharpening his netherite axe. The scrape of the whetstone against metal echoed in the mostly empty room. He'd taken off his forest green cloak at least. It lay in a puddle of fabric by his side.

Dream didn't look up as Sapnap walked in the room. He remembered when George sitting on the throne felt exciting. Now, Sapnap felt tempted to curl up next to him and let George's magic roll over him. His best naps had always been next to George.

"Well?" Dream asked when Sapnap stopped in front of him, finally looking up to meet his eyes.

"He got away," Sapnap told him.

Dream nodded. "Did he actually get away?" he asked mildly. "Or did you let him go?"

"Gods, Dream," Sapnap breathed. "He got away. Why would I let him go?"

Dream drew the whetstone across the blade slowly. *Scraaaaaape*. Not for the first time, Sapnap wished he could see his face. He always knew what Dream was thinking when he could. Like this, however, Dream was unreadable.

“You know why,” said Dream. So simply. So damning.

Sapnap crossed his arms. “I’m not gonna backstab you just because you made one decision I disagree with.”

“Sure,” Dream agreed. “Not for one. But what about two? Three? We need to be on the same page here, Sapnap.”

“It’d help if I had any idea what you were thinking!” Sapnap snapped.

To his surprise, Dream laughed. “You’ve always hated the mask, huh?” He carefully set the axe and the whetstone to the side and reached up to pull the mask off.

No matter how much time Dream spent hiding it, his face will always be a familiar sight to Sapnap. He was older than that fateful day he had proposed their plan for the crown. He also had a new scar down the bridge of his nose, splitting his face in half. Sapnap still remembered the day he got it. The panic. The fear. Blood running down his face as Sapnap held a cloth to it in an attempt to stem the bleeding. Dream’s calm voice reminding him that head wounds bleed more. That he’d be fine.

Dream gave him a small smile. It looked tired. “You’ve still got my back, right?”

“Always,” Sapnap promised. He ignored the tug on his heart that told him it was a lie.

Dream sighed and leaned back on his hands. “Any news on those kids who were with Wilbur?”

“Actually,” said Sapnap, “yeah. They were in the city around the same time as Ranboo. They’re probably long gone now too though. Apparently, it was just a quick supply run.”

Dream hummed. “Send some soldiers into town with their descriptions to look for them anyway. What about the woman? Niki?”

“In the wind,” Sapnap told him. “No one’s heard from her since the explosion.”

“Most of the revolutionaries are dead or scattered,” said Dream, getting to his feet. He picked up his cloak and swung it around his shoulders. Then began to strap his axe onto his back. “We need to keep an eye out for those three in particular, though. They were the closest to Wilbur.”

“Who even *was* Wilbur?” Sapnap asked. “Why start the revolution in the first place? I’ll never get it.”

Dream picked up his mask, studying the smile engraved on the front. “He was an idealist. Nothing more.”

---

Ranboo was already beginning to regret tagging along with the two boys he had run into by chance. The taller blond one was surly, shooting him the occasional mean glare. The shorter brunet one was friendly, but only in a way that made him feel like a specimen being studied by a scientist.

“How old are you?” was Tubbo’s first question.

“Um,” said Ranboo. “I don’t really know? Probably around your age.”

“How much of you is enderman?”

“I think around half?”

“How does your teleportation work?”

“I don’t know? I think it happens whenever I’m scared? I can’t control where I go, and I don’t go very far.”

“You seem to know very little about yourself,” Tubbo noted.

“The guy is a fuckin’ amnesiac, Tubbo,” Tommy cut in. “That’s kind of the whole point.”

They’d been walking for a few hours now. Other than their brief near encounter with Sapnap, the roads were mostly empty. Ranboo had to deliberately walk slowly so the shorter two could keep up. He’d never realized how much his long legs made a difference until Tubbo had to jog every few steps to stay next to him.

“We should probably find a place to sleep tonight,” said Tubbo. “It’s gonna be dark soon.”

“Um. Why does that matter?” asked Ranboo.

Tubbo and Tommy gave him an odd look. “Because it’s hard to see at night. Obviously,” said Tommy.

“Oh.” Ranboo scratched the back of his head. “Is it?”

“Oh my gods! You have night vision!” Tubbo exclaimed, clapping his hands together.

“I do?”

“You’re like a cat! I wonder if your eyes are reflective. I should shine a light in them!”

Ranboo winced. “No you shouldn’t. Please don’t.”

“I guess that makes sense,” Tubbo continued. “Enderman are assumed to be nocturnal.”

“Can we stop treating me like a science experiment?” Ranboo begged. “Please?”

---

They ducked beneath the canopy of the forest before the sun began to truly set. Golden light streamed from between branches that shivered with the wind. They found an area that was mostly clear of the thorny bushes that grew in this area of the forest and settled down. Ranboo watched awkwardly as Tommy kicked branches away to make room for his bedroll. Tubbo sidled up next to him and offered a sip from his waterskin.

“No thanks,” said Ranboo. “Water is like poison to me.”

“Fascinating.” Tubbo went up on his toes to get a closer look at Ranboo’s face. Ranboo leaned away. “Are those scars?”

Ranboo felt his stomach flip at the question. He wondered if it was less or more awful to forget all of the reasons why he had ever cried.

“That’s like, the *one* thing about me I *really* don’t want to talk about.”

“Right.” Tubbo looked a little embarrassed. “Sorry.”

Tommy finished setting up his area and stood up straight with a huff. “I thought you'd never tell him to back off.”

Ranboo watched Tubbo pull his own bedroll out of his pack to place next to Tommy’s. “People make me nervous,” he admitted. “It’s usually easier to go along with them.”

Tommy snorted. “That’s something a little bitch would say.”

“Yup,” Ranboo agreed. “That’s me.”

Tubbo flopped backwards onto his bedroll with a laugh. “Ow! Fuck! That was a rock.” Tubbo wriggled around so he could get a hand under himself to remove the rock. He threw it in Tommy’s direction, who ducked with a yelp.

“Don’t throw shit at me!” he complained.

Tubbo laughed again. Ranboo caught himself starting to smile. Tubbo was tactless, but there was definitely a sort of charm to it. Maybe Ranboo liked him after all.

---



They didn't start a fire. Tubbo's explanation was that the smoke would draw too much attention. Tommy whined about not getting to toast his bread, but he didn't protest otherwise. Tubbo patted the spot next to him.

"Sit," he said. "We can share some of my food."

"You're not getting any of mine, bitch!" Tommy crowed.

Ranboo settled down next to Tubbo, folding his long legs under himself to take as little space as possible. "You don't have to share," he told Tubbo. He was finding that it was easier to just ignore Tommy.

"I'm not letting you starve, Big Man," Tubbo informed him. He tore a piece off his loaf of bread and passed it to Ranboo, who smiled at him gratefully.

Tommy squawked in indignation. "He's not a big man! *I'm* a big man!"

"Tommy, he is literally massive," Tubbo pointed out.

"It's inconvenient actually," Ranboo told him. "I'm always hitting my head on things."

"I have the opposite problems," said Tubbo. "High shelves? Can't reach 'em."

Ranboo nodded in sympathy. "That must be tough."

"Hey, *Ranboob*."

"That's just not my name." Ranboo turned to Tommy, who was offering him a piece of cheese. He stared at it for a moment. "Are you sharing?"

Tommy's face turned red. "Only because I'm the nicest and the best!"

Ranboo gave him another smile as he accepted the piece. "Thanks, Tommy."

Tommy gaped at him. "What the fuck? You dickhead. You're actually nice."

"Um," said Ranboo around the bite of cheese in his mouth. "I really don't know if that was a compliment or an insult."

"It was both," Tubbo informed him helpfully.

---

Ranboo woke up in the middle of the forest, memory entirely blank. It was dark out. His hands and face were covered in tiny scratches that bled sluggishly. Something groaned to his left. Zombie? Mobs were rare, and they usually left him alone. He turned around in a circle, desperately trying to remember *anything*.

Fuzzy faces came to mind. One blond, the other brunet. Names that start with T. Horse's hooves on a dirt path. Lots of walking. His feet were sore. A distant destination. Las Nevadas?

"Crap," he said, running his hands through his hair. He winced as the cuts on his hands got caught on the strands. "Crap."

His eyes found the path his sleepwalking self had taken. Luckily, he hadn't taken the time to cover his trail or avoid trees, which explained why he was covered in cuts. His footprints and broken tree branches created a path that was easy enough to follow.

The zombie groaned again. He jumped. "Time to go," he whispered to himself a little hysterically.

As he followed the trail he kept wracking his memory, hoping something else would resurface, but all he could remember were those two fuzzy faces. Blond and brunet. Names that start with T.

Has he really always been like this? Has his mind always been so fragmented that he couldn't even remember the events of the day previous? He remembered information about the world around him. Trees were trees. Dirt was dirt. A road was a road. He was a citizen of the Dream SMP. But his parents? His childhood? The only thing he could remember was a voice that sent chills down his spine, clear enough to hear it.

*"I need you to do something for me, Ranboo."*

He shuddered.

It only took about ten minutes to reach the campsite he had wandered from. As soon as he saw the two boys curled up asleep on their bedrolls, memories began to resurface. Tommy and Tubbo. He'd run into them by chance on the road. All three of them were on the run from the crown. He remembered hours spent walking. He remembered an oddly easy camaraderie despite only knowing them for a day. All three of them had been joking back and forth before they settled down to sleep. He remembered promising Tubbo he could keep watch first, and that he'd wake him in a few hours.

Relief spread through him, hot and heavy enough to make his knees weak. He leaned back against a tree, sliding down to the ground with a wild laugh. He clamped his hand over his mouth in an effort to stay silent. He remembered. *He remembered.*

"Maybe I should get a book or something," Ranboo muttered to himself, dropping his head between his knees as he reminded himself to breathe. "Write everything down so I can't forget."

He stayed that way for a while. His breathing evened out. His heart rate slowed. Eventually, he looked up at the moon through the trees to check the time. It sat directly over his head. Midnight.

He looked at Tubbo and Tommy sleeping peacefully. He knew he was too wired to be able to fall asleep. Instead of waking Tubbo up as promised, he watched over them for the whole night, until the sun began to rise and splash light on the forest floor.

## Chapter End Notes

Went to Megacon this weekend. It is very aptly named. I saw a Georgenotfound cosplay and I turned around and walked in the other direction. IDK how to talk to other DSMP fans in real life. I wore my Wilbur merch when I went on Friday and a lady behind a stall selling dice was like "Oh my gosh I love your shirt I love the Dream SMP they're such a fun group of friends!" and I started sweating. When I walked past her booth again she went "Bye Wilbur Soot shirt person!" and waved at me. She was very nice.

I'll be [streaming](#) later today if you wanna stop by ;)

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Summary

We learn a little more about the beginnings of the revolution. Dream considers Tommy and Tubbo. Sapnap realizes his loyalties are divided. Tubbo and Ranboo bond.

## Chapter Notes

No warnings for this chapter. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A little cottage on the outskirts of L'manberg made a poor base of operations for a revolution, but they were starting small. Five people squeezed into chairs around a tiny table meant for two. In front of them, blueprints of the palace grounds were laid out.

"You're *sure* this is accurate?" Wilbur asked. He had the collar of his long brown coat turned upwards. The left lens of his glasses was cracked. His hair had grown long and untamed. He hadn't touched his guitar in weeks. There was a new look in his eyes that Tommy didn't like. It was beginning to feel more like an obsession than a revolution. Dreaming of changing the world was one thing... but this?

Quackity kicked his feet up on the table and rolled his eyes. "Snatched it right out of the general's bedroom. Don't know why the guy would keep an inaccurate one."

"Excellent." Wilbur grinned. "We'll need weapons. Explosives."

"Las Nevadas has that covered," Quackity promised. "As long as we get our share."

"Of course," Wilbur promised. "A third of whatever is in the palace vault is yours."

Niki leaned forward, dyed pink hair falling in front of her face. The color had faded in the last few weeks and her blonde roots were showing. "This doesn't have the servant's entrances marked." Niki came from a family of bakers. She grew up in servant's quarters of the castle. She had a particular distaste for the current leadership of the Dream SMP. Tommy had no idea why.

Wilbur passed her a pen. "Show me."

---

“We’re making pretty good time,” Tubbo said, squinting at the map. “We’ll make it to Las Nevadas in about a week, probably.”

“Wish we had horses,” Tommy grumbled. “It’s so much faster with horses.”

Ranboo leaned over to look at the map, casting a shadow over Tubbo’s head.

“Hey!” Tubbo complained. “You’re blocking my light!”

“Sorry,” Ranboo apologized, shuffling over.

The trio had been traveling together for a few days now. Their journey had taken them out of the forest and into grassy plains full of rolling hills. Flowers decorated the landscape with spots of color against green. The sun hung high in the sky. A gentle breeze made the grass wave hello as they walked past.

“Why don’t we take a left at this fork here? Wouldn’t it be faster?” Ranboo asked.

“Bad idea,” Tubbo said. “There’s a military camp out that way. They know we’re in the area. Probably know our faces.”

“Huh,” said Ranboo. “How’d you know that?”

“Rebellion intelligence!” Tommy announced with a grin. “We’ve got a whole network of spies and shit.”

Tubbo rolled up his map and stuck it back in his pack. “What we know probably won’t be good for long. We can’t get any current information. The whole rebellion has been blown to shit. Literally.”

Tommy kicked at a rock in the middle of the road. It soared off into the grass, landing with a gentle thump. “Once we find Wilbur he’ll fix everything.”

“Who’s Wilbur?” Ranboo asked.

“Our leader!” Tommy exclaimed.

“And the one who blew everything to shit,” Tubbo added.

“Well,” Tommy admitted. “I *did* tell him the explosives were a bad idea. And they didn’t even work properly!”

Ranboo’s eyes widened. “Explosives?”

“Wil wanted to blow the whole castle up,” Tommy explained. “But it only took out about half of the east wing.”

“Thank the gods for that,” said Tubbo. “We were still inside!”

Ranboo's eyes were now threatening to pop out of his skull. "He tried to blow it up? With you both *inside*? What were you *doing*?"

"Oh you know," Tommy said casually. "The usual shit. Trying to assassinate the king."

Tubbo sighed. "We weren't even *close* man. If Wilbur had given us twenty minutes without announcing to fucking *everyone* that we were there." He rolled his eyes.

Ranboo looked up to the clear blue sky. "Oh my gods," he whispered. "These people are crazy."

---

Dream leaned against the table, the palms of his hands pressing into walnut brown wood. His eyes followed the swirls in its pattern as he chewed his bottom lip. His mask sat firmly over his face. His green hood was turned up, hiding blond hair. He could feel eyes on his back. Captain Puffy of the royal guard, awaiting orders.

"Why do they rebel?" Dream wondered aloud. He thought about the flashes of dissent in Sapnap's eyes. A feeling of frustration bubbled in his chest that had sat there ever since the pair of teenagers escaped from his grasp. Tommy and Tubbo. Two *kids* snuck inside the castle. Even worse – they got away. He pushed away from the table to face Puffy. She stared back at him evenly, face impassive.

"Do they not remember what the previous king was like?" Dream continued. He turned on his heel and began to pace. Back and forth. Back and forth. "Bandits raiding the farms to the north. He did *nothing*."

"People only focus on what they see now," Puffy told him. "Right now people are starving. It's no surprise the rebellion won support quickly."

Dream paused to look at her. "It takes a lot to feed armies."

"Of course," she agreed.

He studied her. "You remember your duty?" he asked.

"I have sworn to protect the king of the Dream SMP," Puffy told him. "No matter who he is or what he has done."

Dream nodded. "See to it, then."

Puffy inclined her head. Then she turned and left. Her heeled boots clicked against the marble floor. Unbeknownst to Dream, she was thinking about the smell of baking bread and dyed pink hair.

Dream turned around to lean his hands against the table once more.

“Tommy and Tubbo,” he muttered to himself. Perhaps they could be of some use...

---

Sapnap sat heavily onto his bed and rested his head in his hands. Crumpled on the floor was a letter from an informant. The words scribbled in blank ink were damning.

“Why, Quackity?” he whispered.

He thought of the bright joy of fleeting romance. Of summer nights spent with the warmth of two bodies on either side of him. Of a missing map he never thought twice about.

Las Nevadas had been involved in the attempted assassination of King George.

Sapnap stood up abruptly. He leaned over to snatch the letter off the floor. The toe of his boot caught against the rug as he stormed towards the fireplace. He bit out a curse as he staggered a few feet, but he managed to remain upright. He tossed the crumpled paper onto the burnt-out logs and chunks of charcoal. He focused on the ash. Warmth spread from the base of his neck and rushed up to his head. In front of him, the fireplace roared to life. Heat washed over his face as the fire destroyed the evidence.

Quackity was powerful in his own right, but Dream would destroy him without a second thought.

Sapnap felt lightheaded. He didn’t know if it was from the strain of starting a fire from what was essentially nothing or from the fear and uncertainty that ate away at him.

Quackity wasn’t magic, not the way Sapnap was, but he had certainly felt like it. There was an unshakeable charisma to the man. He had drawn in a general of a royal army and a prince of a foreign kingdom with nothing but a grin and some card tricks.

Gods, Sapnap missed Karl. Maybe he should get away for a bit. Take a trip to Kinoko Kingdom. Karl had told him he was welcome whenever he wished. He laughed a little at the thought.

He couldn’t leave the Dream SMP. Not now. Not with the unrest growing in the east with Las Nevadas at its head. Not with the increasing pressure from the north as the Badlands began to coalesce into a central force intent on stealing their territory. Not with George sleeping more and more. Not with... whatever was going on with Dream.

He squeezed his eyes shut and pressed the palms of his hands against his eyelids. Colors burst against black in his vision. Fuck. He dropped his hands, blinking away blurriness.

He needed to talk to Quackity.

---

“Do you believe in gods?” Dream had asked Sapnap once. They had been young – Sapnap just barely a teenager. They sat cross-legged in the grass. Sapnap had burned his way through a pack of matches, practicing getting the flame higher and higher while Dream cheered him on.

Sapnap was taking a break now, head fuzzy with warmth in a way he only experienced while using his magic. “Nah,” he said. “Think it’s stupid.”

“I dunno,” said Dream. He threw himself backwards onto the ground to look at the sky. He stretched his limbs out until he was lying spreadeagle. “I think they’re kinda cool. You know that’s how I picked my name.”

Sapnap gawked down at him. “You named yourself after Dream XD?”

Dream grinned up at him. “It’s a good name, isn’t it?”

---

Tommy jerked awake to Tubbo shaking him, eyes wide with panic. “Mobs!” he hissed.

Tommy scrambled to his feet. His head whipped around, eyes searching. “Where!?”

“I can hear them,” said Ranboo. He was standing with his eyes closed, long ears twitching. “We should leave *now*. It sounds like a zombie hoard.”

“Shit,” said Tommy. “Fuck. I knew we were getting too lucky with those bastards.”

The three of them began frantically packing up. Tommy and Tubbo rolled up their bedrolls. Ranboo held their bags open so they could easily shove them inside. In the middle of the process, the hoard became audible to Tommy and Tubbo’s human ears. The terrible groans sent chills down their spines.

“Wish we had a sword or something.” Tubbo threw his pack over his shoulder. “This is so fucked.”

“*You’re* the one who said swords were too indiscrete!” Tommy shouted back. “Now all we have are these stupid little knives!”

“Now isn’t the time to be arguing guys!” Ranboo cut in. Something glinting in the moonlight on the ground caught his eye. He swooped down to grab it and shoved it in his pocket. “Go!”

They took off, feet pounding against the earth. Zombies were easy to outrun, but it was dark, and the only one who could see properly was Ranboo. Tubbo tripped over a rock. He cried out as he landed hard on his hands and knees. Ranboo caught him by the shirt and hauled him up.



“Thanks!” Tubbo shouted.

“No problem!” Ranboo wheezed back.

Tommy sped up, feet practically flying as he ran. He flung his arms out to the side and began to laugh. “Those dickheads can’t catch us!” He yelled.

Tubbo started to laugh with him. “Race you both!”

“Oh my gods,” Ranboo managed to choke out. “Why are you guys like this?”

They ran until they couldn’t anymore, blood roaring in their ears. They came to a halt when Ranboo just managed to stop them both from tumbling into a stream they could barely see in the dark.

Ranboo bent over, struggling to catch his breath. “My legs are so much longer. How are you guys *faster*?”

Tommy clapped him on the back. “Practice.”

Tubbo knelt by the stream, dipping his fingers in the water. It felt ice cold. Tubbo’s parched throat yearned. “Does this look safe to drink, Ranboo?”

Ranboo shrugged. “I can’t tell from here, and I’m not getting close enough to check.”

“Just drink from your waterskin,” said Tommy, already digging through his bag for his.

“But this is so much colder,” Tubbo whined.

In this moment, a few things happened at once.

The first – Ranboo’s sharp ears caught the sound of bones rattling. The second – an arrow pulled back against the string of a bow. The third – Tubbo turned to face his friends, face scrunched up in disappointment.

Ranboo saw the skeleton a split second before it fired.

“*Tubbo!*” he screamed. A familiar dizzying feeling overcame him. One moment, he was standing by Tommy. The next moment, the world distorted around him. His hands were on Tubbo’s shoulders, shoving him down as an arrow whizzed by over their heads.

“What the fuck!?” Tubbo squawked from where he was sprawled underneath Ranboo.

“Skeleton!” Ranboo shouted, struggling to untangle his limbs from Tubbo’s.

“Shit!” Tommy yelled. He dove to the side as the skeleton fired again, this time aiming for him.

Tubbo finally managed to wriggle out from under him. “You teleported onto me! I thought you couldn’t control it!”

“I can’t!” Ranboo yelped and scrambled backwards as an arrow thudded into the dirt between his legs.

Tommy finally drew his knife and darted forward. He ducked underneath another arrow and lunged forward with a well-placed jab that severed the skull from the spinal cord. The skeleton collapsed like a puppet with its strings cut, falling into a heap of still bones.

“Holy crap,” said Ranboo. “Holy crap.”

“I nearly died.” Tubbo turned to Ranboo. “You saved my life. Thank you.”

Ranboo felt embarrassment warm his cheeks. “You’re welcome? I didn’t know what I was doing, gonna be honest.”

“Oh yeah,” said Tommy. He kicked the severed skull with a huff. “Let’s ignore how cool as shit I was. I actually *killed* the fuckin’ thing. Did you *see that*?”

“I did,” Ranboo acknowledged. “It was very cool.”

Tommy’s ears turned into a brilliant shade of red. “Oh. Yup! I’m the best! Ha!”

“Oh my gods,” Tubbo groaned. He put his head in his hands. “I can’t believe I forgot that mobs are more common in the plains.”

---

The three of them stayed by the river until the sun went up. They had agreed to all stay awake in case there were more mobs, but Tommy had fallen asleep about an hour in. He dozed off leaning against a large rock, head tilted awkwardly to the side in a way that was sure to give him an awful ache in his neck, mouth open.

Ranboo had chosen a spot a safe distance away from the water, and Tubbo had sat down quietly next to him. Ranboo remembered the thing he had picked up earlier and pulled it out of his pocket. He could see now that it was a little glass bee. Tubbo insisted that he keep it.

“A gift,” Tubbo said with a little smile, “for saving me. A thank you.”

“You don’t have to keep thanking me,” said Ranboo, voice soft.

Tubbo leaned over to rest his head against Ranboo’s arm. Ranboo went very, very still. He couldn’t remember a time when someone had touched him without ill intent. Tubbo was warm against his side. The sun began to rise, lighting up the world with pinks and oranges.

“Look at him,” said Tubbo, nodding over at where Tommy lay sleeping. “He’s all I have left. And I’m all he has left. Do you get it?”

Ranboo’s brow furrowed. “Um. Not really. Explain it to me?”

Tubbo huffed a quiet laugh. “I can’t die ‘cause he’d be alone. I don’t really care about myself all that much, but...”

Understanding bloomed in Ranboo’s chest. “Oh,” he said, just barely above a whisper.

“Yeah.”

There was a moment of quiet. Ranboo studied Tommy. As difficult as Tommy could be, he didn’t deserve to be alone. Ranboo had an inkling that he himself had spent a lot of time alone, until now. No one deserved that. But...

Ranboo shifted slightly, trying not to disturb Tubbo. “I think that maybe...” Ranboo trailed off. He fidgeted with the glass bee in his hands. In the growing light, he could see that a wing had been chipped in the commotion. He brought his finger back and forth across the spot, enjoying how the texture went from smooth to rough.

Ranboo took a deep breath. “I think that maybe you should try to care about yourself too.”

Tubbo tilted his head back to look at Ranboo’s face. The lines of his expression were downturned. He looked a little sad.

“Okay,” Tubbo agreed, easily enough. “I’ll try.”

They sat that way for a little while longer, waiting for Tommy to wake.

## Chapter End Notes

I've noticed that I'm getting hits but zero kudos. GUYS. IF YOU LIKE IT PLEASE LEAVE KUDOS IT HELPS I PROMISE. People are more likely to click on fics that have more kudos. Plus it really helps motivate me. I'd really appreciate it :D

On a different note, the last scene in this chapter is probably my favorite that I've written so far. I hope you guys liked it because I really do. Have a great day everyone, and I'll see you when I update on Sunday!

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Summary

Ranboo has officially made friends. Something pays him a visit at night. Dream learns something he doesn't like.

## Chapter Notes

**CHAPTER WARNINGS: auditory hallucinations, or whatever endersmile has got going on**

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“This feels like a bad idea,” said Ranboo, hunching his shoulders even more beneath his tattered cloak. “I don’t exactly blend in.”

“It’ll be fine,” Tubbo reassured him. “Villages this small don’t pay attention to if the people coming through are fugitives. There’s no real military presence here. They just want our money.”

“Yeah!” Tommy crowed, “stop being a bitch!”

The three of them were passing through a town. They had stopped by a marketplace in order to restock on food. The dirt roads were bustling despite the small population of the town. Vendors selling homegrown produce and handcrafted wares lined the streets, ready to make money off of travelers that came through. The smell of baked bread wafted in the air, making their stomachs growl. Despite his protests, Ranboo found himself grateful for the reminder that they weren’t the only people in the world. They’d encountered others out on the road, but paranoia made them duck their heads and walk faster instead of striking up conversation. Tommy and Tubbo were lively company, but there was something about the wilderness that felt oddly lonely. It was familiar in a distant way that he didn’t like.

Tubbo dragged Ranboo to a vendor that was selling wares made of cloth. He was shoving a drawstring bag and a bundle of blankets into Ranboo’s arms before he could say a word.

“I don’t have money to pay for this,” Ranboo said, trying to put the things back.

Tubbo didn’t let him. “I’m buying for you. You saved my life. There’s no way I’m letting you sleep on the grass anymore! Plus, you need something to carry your share of supplies.”

Ranboo blinked. “My share?”

“Yup!” Tubbo agreed cheerfully. “You’re sticking with us now. No matter what.”

The old lady behind the stall laughed at his bemused expression. She leaned toward him and gave him a wink.

“Looks like you’ve made a good friend,” she whispered to him as Tubbo dug through his pouch of coins.

“Yeah,” Ranboo said, feeling a little dazed.

Tommy ran up to them as Tubbo paid, mouth full of bread. He shouted something that was unintelligible around the food in his mouth and handed Ranboo a slice.

“What?” Ranboo asked.

Tommy took a moment to swallow. “Try it!” he said again.

Ranboo tried it. “Oh my gods.”

“Right?” said Tommy. “Bread is so much better fresh.”

“Gimme,” said Tubbo, making grabby hands in Tommy’s direction. He made a happy noise as he sank his teeth into a slice.

“Hey Tubbo?” Ranboo asked.

“Yeah?” Tubbo responded with his mouth full.

“If you’re willing to buy for me, there’s something else I need.”

They left the village with their stomachs comfortably full, all three of them with bags hoisted over their shoulders. At the bottom of Ranboo’s sat a blank leatherbound journal.

---

They took the road heading east. They passed from grassy plains into a new forest. The trees were now spruce instead of the oak that had surrounded L’manberg. Their spindly branches reached up towards the sky. Pine needles littered the ground beneath their feet. Whenever they inhaled, the scent of evergreen filled their noses.

“How far are we from Las Nevadas?” Tommy asked Tubbo.

“Prolly two or three days,” Tubbo replied.

“Why are you guys heading this way, anyway?” Ranboo asked.

Tommy grinned. “We’re friends with the mayor! He knows where someone we’re looking for is.”

Tubbo nodded. “Plus Las Nevadas was helping with the revolution. Everyone who’s still left is probably heading there too. Hopefully we can run into some of them.”

Ranboo frowned at his shoes. “I don’t even know why I’m going. It seemed like the right place, but now I have no idea what I’m supposed to do. What if I can’t remember anything?”

“Then you stick with us,” said Tommy. “Obviously.”

Ranboo looked at him, surprised at the invitation that was more of a demand.

“What?” Tommy asked, visibly embarrassed. “Your teleportation thing is useful! You better save my life next, bitch!”

“Aww,” Tubbo teased. “You like him, don’t you?”

Tommy sputtered. “I do not! This is pure logic!”

---

Their routine for settling down for the night had become familiar. Despite Tommy’s protests, he had to admit (only in the privacy of his own head) that Ranboo was a welcome presence. He had an earnestly helpful way about him. Ask him to gather sticks for a fire or to clear out an area to set up camp, and he’d trot off to do so with an agreeable cheer.

Ranboo was also fucking suspicious. No memory? It seemed way too convenient. But the way he seemed genuinely fearful and confused helped make him convincing. Also, the more Tommy got to know him, the surer he became of the fact that Ranboo wouldn’t have the guts to lie continuously to their faces. Still, something was off about him. Other than the amnesia of course.

Tommy wondered if maybe Wilbur’s paranoia was rubbing off on him. He remembered the decline in Wilbur’s mental state. He went from squared shoulders and a confident grin to wild eyes and smelling constantly of gunpowder.

*“Are we the bad guys, Tommy?”*

Maybe they had been. Tommy didn’t fucking know anymore. People in the streets were starving, sure, but they were also *safe*. They were safe and maybe it hadn’t been their place to mess with that. Now Wilbur was gone, and Tommy was stuck with the consequences of going along with his ambitions. All he had left was his best friend and a fragile hope that he could find people to help him finish what Wilbur had started.

Dream had to go. George was king, but Dream was the cause of the people’s misery. He’d never stop hunting Tommy and Tubbo down unless he was gone.

A surprised yelp of pain jerked Tommy out of his thoughts.

“Sorry! Sorry!” Tubbo blurted out, sounding a little panicked. Ranboo had flinched back from him, shaking his hand off with a hiss.

“It’s fine,” Ranboo reassured him. “It only burns a little bit. It just scared me.”

“What burns?” Tommy asked.

“Water,” Ranboo told him, holding his hand out so Tommy could look. “It’s the enderman in me.”

“I completely forgot,” said Tubbo, slapping a hand to his forehead. “I’m an idiot.”

“You’re not an idiot,” Ranboo gently admonished him. “It’s fine. Seriously.”

The three were sitting around a fire, stomachs full of toasted bread with cheese melted on top. Tubbo had determined that they were far enough from L’manberg to start a fire, and they had taken advantage of it immediately. Tubbo had offered Ranboo some water on autopilot and accidentally spilled some on him.

“I can take the first watch, if you want,” said Ranboo. “I’m not really tired. I think I sleep less than most people do, anyway.”

Tommy stretched back onto his blankets with a yawn. “Good, because I’m fuckin’ exhausted.”

---

Ranboo hated nights. Sleeping never went well for him. Either he’d wake up with no memory or in a different place from where he had lied down or both.

But staying awake was often worse.

Ranboo heard the voice sometimes, as clear as if someone was speaking right into his ear.

Tonight he began his diligent record of his memories. When he pressed the quill to the paper, he learned that his handwriting was long and loopy. He couldn’t remember writing before, but he clearly knew how.

He started off with a list of friends. He wrote *Tubbo*, then he paused for a moment, considering. *Tommy* ended up written right beneath it. He filled up the page with descriptions of both of them. He wanted to remember them. He didn’t know anyone else worth remembering.

*Tommy is kind of rude, Ranboo wrote, but I think that’s just how he is. Tubbo is definitely my friend.*

He flipped the page and began to recount their travels. He started off with how they met on the road. He wrote down how he'd saved Tubbo from the skeleton. He added how the other boy had repaid him with blankets and this journal and a little glass bee that he now kept tucked away in his pocket. He scribbled down a quick note that both Tommy and Tubbo had said he could stick with them. He definitely didn't want to forget that.

*"Hello Ranboo."*

No. He dropped his journal and pressed his hands over his ears. It never worked. The voice was something like a memory. It was in his head, even if it sounded real.

"Go away," he muttered. "You're not real."

*"Does that matter?"* the voice asked. *"You can still hear me, can't you? Doesn't that make me real to you?"*

"I don't even know who you are," Ranboo hissed.

*"You do,"* it insisted. *"You just don't want to remember. You help me."*

"No I don't," said Ranboo. "I don't know you."

*"You don't even know yourself."*

"Just go away!" he snapped. Then he clamped a hand over his mouth and shot a worried look to where Tommy and Tubbo slept. Neither of them stirred.

The voice didn't respond.

---

Anger for Dream burned steady, calculating. Sapnap ran hot – literally and figuratively. His anger felt like explosive heat. George rarely got angry. He rarely felt anything these days. But Dream simmered, like a pot on the stove waiting to boil over. Anger focused him. It brought clarity to his thoughts; removing pesky things like friendship that got in the way.

His hands neatly folded a sheet of paper and stuck it in his pocket.

Dream remembered the summer after George had been crowned king. Leaders from all over the world had been invited to the celebration as a diplomatic courtesy. He remembered the prince of Kinoko Kingdom. He had been awkward, but with an odd charm. His nails had been painted purple. Sapnap had been infatuated immediately.

*Good*, Dream had thought then. If Sapnap was going to marry, this was something that could be beneficial for the Dream SMP. They needed allies associated with the new king, not the old.



Then there was Quackity.

Quackity hadn't been invited, exactly, but he'd shown up anyway. Curiosity to meet the new king had brought him to L'manberg. No one would throw out one of the most powerful men in the entire country.

Las Nevadas was practically a country on its own. The previous ruler of the Dream SMP had struggled to keep them in line, and Dream had a feeling this wouldn't be changing. There were too many powerful people that called the city their home.

So when Quackity had flirted shamelessly with Sapnap, had wriggled his way into his affections along with the prince, Dream had counted it as a blessing. A direct line to not only one, but two powerful men? Dream had thought that he could use them.

He'd never thought that Sapnap would be the one to end up used. He'd never thought that Sapnap would be loyal to anyone but him.

Anger did away with any affection he held for his friend. The puzzle pieces were falling into place. Las Nevadas had been involved in the attempted assassination of King George, and Sapnap had been Quackity's way in.

"Captain," Dream said. Puffy straightened up behind him. "Go get me the General."

"I can't," she said. "He left for Las Nevadas about an hour ago. He didn't tell you?"

The pot boiled over.

"No," Dream replied, his voice ice cold. "He didn't."

---

Sapnap didn't have a way with horses. Something about him made animals skittish. Maybe because he was magic. Maybe because his magic was destructive if he wanted it to be. They could sense the perverse danger to him. Horses were useful, though, so he'd learned how to manage them anyway. Dream had a way with them. Dream had a way with everything.

He rode hard out of the city. He'd left Captain Puffy with a few orders before leaving. The first was to continue searching for the missing fugitives. The second was to keep an eye on George. He didn't know how much he could trust Dream to do that anymore. Technically, Sapnap ranked higher than Dream as the general of the Dream SMP's royal army. Dream hadn't wanted an official title. He said that it would limit him. But that meant that Puffy would obey Sapnap before she obeyed Dream.

He hoped it never came to that.

Sapnap had followed Dream unquestioningly before. It was the kind of blind loyalty that came with utter respect. He'd seen glimpses of cruelty before, but never anything enough to

make him doubt. Not until Ranboo.

That hadn't been right. Admittedly, he didn't care much about Ranboo in particular. He didn't know him. But if Dream had been willing to do that to a teenager, what would he do to Quackity?

Sapnap's list of friends was shorter than most. Quackity, first and foremost, was his friend. Everything was muddled now. He'd been used, but it wouldn't feel right to condemn Quackity without first getting his side of the story.

There were things Dream refused to tell him. Where Wilbur went, for starters. There had been no body. Dream only told Sapnap that he'd been taken care of. Nothing else.

He could only pray that Quackity would be more upfront with him.

## Chapter End Notes

I am currently on vacation right now. I watched MCC sitting on the beach with sand blowing into my face. I think I ate quite a bit of it. There's something crunchy happening between my teeth whenever I bite down. Whatever. Totally worth it. I watched Purpled for most of it, and he did fantastic.

(Speaking of Purpled, guess who's in the next chapter. Haha.)

Remember to leave kudos if you enjoyed! Comments are greatly appreciated, and subscribe to see new updates! Have a good weekend everyone!

# Chapter 5

## Chapter Summary

Multiple people arrive at Las Nevadas. Conversations are had.

## Chapter Notes

No warnings for this chapter, but it is EXTREMELY dialogue heavy. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Most people hated their bosses. It was the natural order of things. When there's someone you ordering you around, telling you to do things you really don't want to do, you began to hate them. Naturally.

No one hated their boss quite as much as Purpled hated his.

He should have stayed with Punz.

Purpled came from the Badlands when he was in his younger teens. He'd followed Punz, a mercenary for hire, who at the time had been his only friend and mentor. Purpled had been so eager to follow in his footsteps. He'd caught Punz's – and eventually Quackity's – eye because he was magic. From the moment he'd first picked up a sword, he'd known how to use it as if he'd been trained for years. From there, his skill only increased rapidly with practice. He could keep up with the best of them despite his young age.

He was smart too. Always had been. You had to be smart to survive in the Badlands. Especially as a kid.

Somehow, despite his magic and his smarts, Quackity had still practically blackmailed him into working for him. Now he stood in Quackity's office, hand resting on the netherite sword that sat at his hip, seething with a quiet rage that had become a constant for him.

“You got that, Purpled?” Quackity asked.

Purpled rolled his eyes. “I'm not your fucking secretary.”

Quackity put down his pen to look at him. One of his eyes was normal. The other was dull with blindness, a jagged scar running through his eyebrow all the way down to his upper lip. The guy wasn't a fighter. He usually had other people do the fighting for him. If Purpled hadn't hated him so much, he'd be tempted to ask how he got it.

“You’re whatever I fucking tell you to be,” Quackity snapped at him. “Get me the fucking coffee.”

“I’ll get it!” Charlie Slimecicle volunteered cheerfully. He sat on a corner of Quackity’s desk, dripping onto the expensive wood and expensive floor. Quackity had pushed all of his papers to the opposite side to keep them out of the splash zone. The guy was some sort of slime hybrid. He was also gross and weirdly happy to do anything Quackity asked.

Purpled hated his coworkers too.

“Yeah,” Purpled said, crossing his arms. “Slime can do it.”

Quackity snorted. “Have you seen the way it makes a mess of everything? No way. Just get me the fucking coffee, Purpled.”

Purpled huffed. One day he’d give Quackity what he deserves. Him and his stupid pet slime. “Fine.”

On his way out the door, he nearly walked straight into Foolish. Out of everyone in Las Nevadas, Foolish made him feel the least rage, but he was still freakishly weird. He hadn’t believed it at first, but Foolish was some sort of minor deity. He’d scoffed at the idea until he walked outside once and saw Foolish over fifty feet tall, building a new casino like a child playing with toys. Purpled would never understand how Quackity got Foolish of all people to work with him. When he’d asked, Foolish just looked at him blankly and said that Quackity gave him projects to build and paid him, as if that was enough to earn a god’s loyalty.

Maybe it was. Purpled wasn’t a god. He hadn’t even believed in them until he’d met Foolish.

Foolish towered over Purpled at a more reasonable eight feet tall today. He still had to duck under the doorway to make it into the office. His golden skin gleamed in the light. Purpled found himself wondering more than once if he felt like normal skin or solid gold.

“Tommy and Tubbo are here,” Foolish said, forgoing any pleasantries. Despite his willingness to work for him, Purpled was convinced that Foolish kind of hated Quackity too. He wasn’t a particularly likeable boss. “There’s another guy too. Looks like an enderman hybrid.”

Quackity sat back in his chair, wings rustling as they stretched out to allow the movement. They were some kind of duck wings – mallard, Quackity had told him once unprompted. Mostly gray and brown, with a shiny portion of blue that you could only really see when he extended them.

Purpled entertained himself with a vivid image of grabbing fistfuls of his primaries and ripping them out.

“Shit,” said Quackity. “I thought they were dead. Wilbur isn’t with them?”

Foolish shook his head. “Just the enderman guy. He said his name is Ranboo.”

“Huh. Alright. Send them in.”

---

Las Nevadas is overwhelming even to the least anxiety-ridden of individuals. Ranboo, a *very* anxiety-ridden individual, wanted to leave immediately. The streets were bustling, but not in a friendly way. The whole city made Ranboo want to clutch his bag tight to his chest and never let go. They passed casino after casino and restaurant after restaurant. The buildings stretched farther upwards than Ranboo could ever remember seeing before. Between that and all the noise, he was starting to feel caged in.

“Is that a brothel?” he squawked as they passed by.

“Yup,” said Tubbo. “Don’t make eye contact.”

“I won’t make eye contact. I hate eye contact.”

“I know.”

“Aren’t brothels illegal?”

Tommy snorted a laugh. “Las Nevadas does what it wants. Gambling on fighting is illegal too, but half of these ‘casinos,’” Tommy made air quotes with his fingers, “are actually just fight clubs.”

Huh. Ranboo tightened his grip around his bag.

“Whatever makes them money goes,” Tubbo explained. “Legality doesn’t matter here. The law can’t really touch them. Too much power and too much wealth.”

“When the old king got replaced, the new one started making stricter laws and shit about gambling. Obviously, Las Nevadas didn’t like that. The more illegal stuff is, the less tourists they get. People get scared of getting caught. A whole lotta pussies, if you ask me,” Tommy continued.

Ranboo nodded. “That’s why they helped you guys.”

“Yeah,” said Tubbo. “But it helped that Wilbur was *good friends* with the mayor, if you know what I mean.”

Ranboo blinked. “Oh.”

Tommy punched Tubbo on the shoulder. “It wasn’t like that! I mean, there was that one time where it looked like they were kissing, but Wilbur told me they weren’t like that.”

“Uh huh.” Tubbo’s tone was dubious. “And Wilbur was so good at being honest with you.”

“Fuck off,” Tommy snapped. He looked a little hurt. Tubbo looked a little guilty.

Oh great. Ranboo loved it when things were awkward. He already existed in a constant state of some degree of awkwardness. This definitely did not make it worse. Nope.

“So we’re going to see the mayor then,” Ranboo said in a feeble attempt to diffuse the tension. “What was his name again?”

---

“Big Q!” Tommy cheered as he burst into the office.

Quackity grinned and got to his feet, spreading his arms wide in a welcoming gesture. “Tommy! Tubbo! Welcome to Las Nevadas!”

Behind Quackity stood Purpled and Charlie. Purpled looked vaguely annoyed. He leaned against the wall, arms crossed, foot tapping an impatient rhythm against the floor. Charlie waved enthusiastically, sending goop flying around the room. Ranboo ducked to avoid a splatter that threatened to land on his face.

“Hello! My very human bones welcome you!” Charlie exclaimed.

“Um,” said Ranboo, perturbed. “Hello?”

“Hi,” said Tubbo, unperturbed. He waved back. Charlie looked delighted by this.

“It’s good to see you guys!” Quackity exclaimed. “I thought you might’ve died or something.”

Tommy puffed out his chest. “We don’t do the dying! Only the killing!”

“You’ve never killed anyone in your life,” Tubbo deadpanned.

Tommy spluttered. “Only because *Wilbur* ruined it!”

Quackity’s gaze sharpened. He braced himself against the desk and leaned forward. “Where *is* Wilbur, anyway?”

At the question, Tommy visibly deflated.

Tubbo sighed. “No idea. We were kinda hoping you knew.”

Quackity frowned. “Sorry. I haven’t seen him. Haven’t seen anyone else from your group either.” He sank back down into his chair with a huff.

“Shit,” said Tommy. He raked a nervous hand through his hair.

“Yeah,” Quackity agreed. “You guys still have our help. I want the king and Dream *gone*. But we can’t do anything but supply you. Las Nevadas survives by keeping to itself.”

“Wilbur said you knew where his dad is?” Tubbo said, phrasing it like a question.  
“Apparently he’ll help us.”

Quackity looked surprised for a moment. Then he let out a short laugh.

“Fucking Wilbur,” he scoffed with a roll of his eyes. “I never told him that.”

“Why not?” asked

“You don’t exactly tell a guy that you were planning on turning his dad in for a bounty,” Quackity explained with another laugh. “He has a massive price on his head. He was fucking hard to find too. Never could’ve done it without Charlie.”

“Yay! I’m helpful!” Charlie cheered, clapping his hands together, which made more goo fly everywhere. A glob landed on Purpled’s cheek. His expression turned downright murderous.

“You’re fucking disgusting,” Purpled complained, furiously scrubbing at his cheek with his sleeve.

Tommy’s brow furrowed. “He never told me that his dad was wanted.”

Quackity scratched the back of his head. “Well, we all know how open Wilbur was.”

Tommy clenched his jaw and said nothing. His hand went automatically to the ring he wore on a chain beneath his shirt. Cheap metal under a thin layer of painted on gold.

“What stopped you from collecting the bounty?” Tubbo asked.

Quackity’s face darkened. He tapped a finger against the scar on his face, right below his blind eye. “This.”

“Oh awesome. That’s comforting,” said Ranboo faintly.

Quackity’s face lightened again]as he snickered. “So, you’re Ranboo?”

“Uh huh,” said Ranboo. “That’s me. This is gonna sound weird but... do you know me?”

Quackity squinted at his face. “Nope. Why do you ask?”

Tommy threw an arm around Ranboo’s shoulders, forcing him to hunch over further than he usually does. “*Memory* boy here has got amnesia.”

“Okay,” said Ranboo. “That’s another nickname I don’t like.”

“Dream is after him too,” Tubbo told Quackity. “It’s why he’s sticking with us. He just can’t remember why.”

“I thought I had to go to Las Nevadas,” said Ranboo with a frown. “But I can’t remember why for that either. I was hoping you’d know me.”

Quackity hummed thoughtfully, scratching his chin. "It's a big city. I can have someone ask around about you if you'd like."

"That would be great," Ranboo said gratefully. "Thank you."

Foolish chose that moment to burst into the room. Ranboo jumped about five feet in the air as the door slammed open.

"He's here!" Foolish shouted frantically.

"Uh," said Quackity. "Who?"

"Sapnap!" Foolish yelled back. "I tried to get him to wait at the entrance, but-"

"Oh shit," Quackity cut him off.

"*Sapnap?!?*" Tommy squawked. "Why is the *general* of the *royal army* here!?"

Quackity jumped to his feet. "He's a friend."

"A *friend*?" Tubbo asked dubiously.

"We don't have time for this," Quackity said, exasperated. "Look, I'll try to stall him, but you three need to hide. Purpled!"

Purpled sighed. "Already on it."

Quackity bolted out the door with Foolish on his heels. Purpled made his way over to the left side of the room where a bookshelf stood. He pulled it away from the wall with a grunt, revealing a hidden nook just big enough for the three of them.

"Get in," he told them. Tubbo and Tommy didn't hesitate, but Ranboo stared at inside warily.

"I'm too tall."

"Just duck, dude," Purpled said with a roll of his eyes. "Do you *want* to get caught?"

"Nope! I'll duck!"

Ranboo ducked inside, squeezing himself in next to Tommy and Tubbo. Purpled pushed the bookshelf back into place, muttering a curse as a few books fell onto the floor. He leaned down to pick them up as the door to the office flew open. Sapnap stormed in, face flushed and furious. Quackity trailed in after him looking nervous. Purpled suddenly became very interested in the books in his hands.

Behind the bookshelf, Ranboo wriggled around trying to fit better. He pressed against the wall and slid one of his too-long arms behind Tommy's back, who hissed "The fuck are you doing?"

"I have nowhere else to put it!" he whispered back



“You’re practically cuddling me!”

“I don’t want to!”

Tubbo kicked Tommy in the shin. “Quiet!”

The sound of Sapnap’s voice make them all freeze. “Get them out.”

For a horrifying moment, all three thought he knew they were hidden in the room.

“Jesus,” said Quackity. “Are you breaking up with me?”

Sapnap sighed. “Please.”

“Alright alright,” Quackity acquiesced. “Wait outside guys.”

“Oh thank the gods,” said Purpled, shoving the books he was holding back onto the shelf.

“Aw man!” said Charlie. He skipped to the door, leaving slimy footprints in his wake. As it walked past Quackity he gave him a very loud, wet, kiss on the cheek.

“Eugh!” Quackity complained, pushing it away. “I told you to stop doing that!”

Purpled followed after Slime. His eyes met Sapnap’s for a brief moment before sliding away. The door clicked shut behind them. Sapnap leaned against the desk, crossing his arms as he scowled at Quackity.

“What the hell did you do?” Sapnap asked.

Quackity mirrored his pose and crossed his own arms. “The fuck do you mean by that?”

Sapnap laughed humorlessly. “Dude. You know what I’m talking about.”

Quackity’s wings puffed up as his irritation rose. “No, I actually fucking don’t! If you’re gonna come in here like you own the place you could at least fucking tell me *why* !”

Sapnap held up his left hand to brandish the two rings that sat on his hand. One gleamed with purple amethyst, the other with blue sapphire. “Did this mean *nothing* to you?”

Quackity flinched, hurt flashing across his face. “Of course it did!”

“You’re not even wearing them!” Sapnap exclaimed.

Wordlessly, Quackity pulled a chain he wore around his neck from underneath shirt. On it dangled two rings – a matching amethyst one, and a different one with a fire-red ruby. All the fight drained out of Sapnap. He slumped back against the desk, running his hand over his face.

“Gods, Quackity. Did you help Wilbur?”

Quackity went still. The rings on the chain clinked together as he let it fall back against his chest. He mentally scrambled for some kind of lie, but it took too long to come together. His silence was as good as a yes. Sapnap nodded.

“You weren’t supposed to get hurt,” Quackity said a little desperately.

“What about George? Dream?” Sapnap challenged.

Quackity said nothing.

“They’re my friends, Quackity!” Sapnap yelled. The temperature in the room rose. The oil lamp on the desk next to Sapnap lit suddenly, small flame flaring in response to his anger.

“Well they’re shit friends!” Quackity snapped. “They’re shit to you! All Dream does is *use* people! He uses you! You’d be happier without them and you know it!”

“That’s not for you to decide!” Sapnap snarled back.

Quackity threw his arms up in the air. “Then *you* do something about it! People are *starving* ! This nation is slowly dying, and it’s *their* fault!”

Sapnap’s eyes turned cold. “Don’t act like you care about that. All you care about is your stupid city.”

“Oh my gods,” Quackity said breathlessly. “Fuck *you*. Stop acting like you know what I care about!”

There was a moment of silence. Then Quackity added, “I *do* care about you.”

Sapnap studied the rings on his finger. He looked back up at Quackity. “Don’t try to kill one of my best friends then.”

With that he stalked out the door, slamming it shut behind him.

“Fuck,” said Quackity with a hysterical laugh.

Behind the bookshelf, the three teens shared wide eyed looks.

“Can we come out now?” Tommy asked, voice muffled by the wood and the books.

Quackity jumped as if he’d forgotten they were there.

“Fuck,” he said again, burying his face in his hands.

I kind of feel like I'm posting to the void. Hello? Anyone home? Do people just not go through the bench trio tag anymore?

To make me feel like I am in less of a void, please remember to leave kudos if you enjoyed! Engage with me. Please. I am so desperate.

Can you guys tell I really like the Las Nevadas group? It was easily one of my favorite plot points in all of the DSMP lore. I'd write more of them into here if I could, but there's really no place for them past these next few chapters. I loved the Purpled POV in this chapter. Writing characters fundamentally pissed off at everyone is so much fun.

Not sure if any Punz fans are finding this. If you are, get excited about his mention in this chapter. He has a very important role to play in this story.

Have a great day everyone!

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Summary

Tommy and Tubbo learn a little bit more about Ranboo. Sapnap has a chat with someone.

## Chapter Notes

**CHAPTER WARNINGS: minor dissociation/memory loss. Ranboo has a Ranboo moment.**

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Even at night, the streets of Las Nevadas remained busy. Tubbo could hear the commotion through the window. Quackity had given them a room at the hotel for free. Tommy had been gleeful at the prospect of running water.

*“Look!”* he’d exclaimed, sticking his hand under the faucet. *“It comes out hot!”*

Las Nevadas had much more technologically advanced buildings than L’manberg did. Running water was a rarity, and expensive, but Las Nevadas had the means. Tommy had taken a bath immediately, disappearing into the bathroom with an eager grin. Ranboo had collapsed onto one of the two beds and promptly conked out. He insisted that he didn’t sleep much, but Tubbo had a feeling he just didn’t like to sleep for some reason. Maybe he had bad dreams.

Tommy had emerged from the bathroom, hair dripping wet with a relaxed grin on his face. He insisted that Tubbo try out the bathtub before burying himself under the covers on the other bed, quickly joining Ranboo in his sleep.

Tubbo sat in the lone chair at the tiny desk in the corner of the room. The map Quackity had given him was spread out before him. Tommy had been excited about the water, but Tubbo had been more impressed by the electricity. He’d flicked the lights on and off multiple times when they’d walked in. The lights were off now, because Tommy had grumbled that it was too bright to sleep. He read the map using a lit candle instead. More white wax dripped down its side the longer he studied it.

Tubbo knew he should probably go bathe. He smelled of dirt and sweat. He should probably sleep too. But Tubbo didn’t like not knowing things. Quackity had given him the location of Wilbur’s dad. His name was Philza, apparently. Tubbo wanted to have their route memorized

before they set out tomorrow. He'd always had an analytical mind. It made him good at reading maps.

It also made him rather good at building bombs.

He didn't like not knowing what had given Quackity his scar. Quackity seemed reluctant to talk about it, but he had reassured them that Philza would have no reason to harm them. Tubbo didn't know how much he believed him, but he didn't really have a choice. Tommy would insist on going no matter what. Tubbo would never let him go alone. He didn't know what Ranboo was going to do now that his journey had turned out to be seemingly fruitless. He didn't like not knowing that either.

A headache pulsed behind his left eye. Outside the window, two men started a shouting match that made concentrating impossible. Tubbo leaned back, pressing the palm of his hand against the dull, throbbing pain.

"Ugh," he groaned to himself. "Do these people ever shut up?"

Fuck it, he decided. He was gonna go try out the hot water. Then he'd go to sleep. He had a good general idea of where they needed to go. He could figure out the rest in the morning.

The hot water, did in fact, feel awesome.

He emerged from the bathroom and threw himself onto Ranboo's bed, simply because it was closer, and was basically asleep before his head hit the pillow.

---

Tubbo woke up to Ranboo getting out of the bed.

"Ranboo?" he mumbled, half asleep.

Ranboo didn't reply. Tubbo sat up slowly and tried to blink himself awake, watching the tall shadow in the dark room that was Ranboo make its way to the door. It opened with a click, and Ranboo slipped outside silently.

"Huh," said Tubbo. He threw off the covers and got out of the bed, socked feet silent against the floor as he crept after him.

Tommy's voice behind him made him jump. "Tubbo?"

Tommy was sitting up in his own bed, sleepily rubbing his eyes.

"Ranboo just wandered off," Tubbo explained. "I'm gonna see what he's up to. Go back to sleep."

Tommy woke up more immediately. “No way. I told you he was fuckin’ weird. I’m coming with.”

He got to his feet and together they both peeked out the open door, spotting Ranboo at the end of the hallway.

“Ranboo!” Tommy hissed. No response. Tommy and Tubbo exchanged a glance.

Tommy moved forward first, cautiously approaching. He reached up and put a hand on Ranboo’s shoulder. At the touch he turned around, staring blankly at Tommy, right into his eyes. The moment their eyes locked Tommy froze. His skin crawled.

“Ranboo?” he asked, voice high with nerves.

Ranboo blinked a few times. His expression went from empty to confused. He turned around in a circle, curiously looking around him.

“Hey, Big Man,” said Tubbo, coming up behind Tommy. “Do you know where you are?”

Ranboo turned to him in response to the question. He looked a little panicky now. “Uh,” he said. “No? I don’t know who you are. What’s going on?”

Tommy and Tubbo exchanged horrified looks.

“I’m Tommy,” said Tommy, jabbing a thumb towards his chest. “And that’s-”

“Tubbo,” Ranboo finished for him, recognition dawning on his face. “I remember now. We’re in a hotel?”

Tommy and Tubbo both sagged in relief.

“Yep,” said Tubbo. “We’re in a hotel.”

Ranboo rubbed the back of his neck. “Sorry about that. Was I sleepwalking? I do that sometimes.”

“Yeah,” said Tommy. “It was freaky.”

Ranboo winced. “Sorry.”

The three of them walked back into their room. The moment the door shut behind them, Tubbo fixed Ranboo with a curious look. Ranboo shifted back awkwardly.

“Does that happen a lot?” Tubbo asked. “Waking up with no memories.”

Ranboo sat down on his bed with a heavy sigh, curling his fingers into the soft blanket.

“Yeah,” he admitted. “It’s why I asked you for the journal. I’ve been writing everything down in case I forget.”

Tubbo flicked on the light and all three of them winced as their eyes adjusted. Tommy sat down on his bed across from Ranboo, brow furrowed with concern.

“What *do* you remember?” Tommy asked.

Ranboo had let go of the blanket and began fidgeting with his hands, lacing his long fingers together before pulling them apart, over and over again. “I remember meeting you guys,” Ranboo told him. “And I remember yesterday. I remember traveling. But I think there are some holes.”

Tubbo sat down next to Tommy, bracing his elbows on his knees as he leaned forward. “What holes?” he asked.

“Well,” said Ranboo. “I uh... I remember you thanking me for saving you? But I don’t remember what I saved you from. Stuff like that.”

“Shit, man,” Tommy said. “Why is your brain so fucked up?”

Ranboo winced. “I wish I knew.”

“It was a skeleton,” Tubbo told him. He reached forward and grabbed Ranboo’s hands, giving them a squeeze. “You saved me from a skeleton.”

“Oh,” Ranboo breathed, eyes widening. “Yeah. I remember now.”

Tommy watched the exchange, before nodding to himself. “So you remember shit if we remind you. Just ask if you’re like, I dunno, confused about something. We can remind you.”

Ranboo looked so ridiculously grateful that Tommy wanted to rescind the offer immediately.

“Just because it’s inconvenient if you’re forgetting shit!” Tommy added on, flustered. “Not because I like you. You’re a bitch.”

“Right,” said Ranboo. He was smiling.

“Oh fuck off!” Tommy huffed.

Tubbo pushed Tommy’s shoulder, causing him to topple back onto the bed with a strangled yelp.

“Ignore him,” Tubbo said to Ranboo.

“I resent that!” Tommy complained from where he was sprawled backwards.

---

Las Nevadas had the cleanest alleyways Sapnap had ever seen in a city – too clean. Quackity’s obsession with his image pushed him to hire crews to clean out trash and kick out the homeless. The place brimmed with carefully controlled crime. Gambling, prostitution, and pickpocketing were all fair game, but gods forbid anything that made *Quackity* look bad.

Something heavy and uncomfortable writhed in Sapnap’s chest. He’d fought with Quackity before, but never like that. Never over something quite that big. He’d been close to taking off his ring and throwing it at Quackity’s face. It’d been the thought of Karl that had stopped him.

Karl balanced them out. He always had. Sapnap and Quackity were naturally hot-headed, but Karl had a much more easy-going way about him. Sapnap knew he’d keep Quackity’s ring on his finger until he had a chance to speak to Karl. It wasn’t fair to him to make that big of a decision while he was away.

The only time Las Nevadas ever grew quiet was the hour before sunrise. Tourists returned to their rooms as the sky grew lighter, and with them gone all the businesses closed. They wouldn’t reopen until just before noon, when everyone began to wake up again. This time of day marked the only moment when one could find an empty alleyway. Sapnap stood with his hands shoved into his pockets as he waited. The only thing keeping him company was a shattered bottle of beer, which he was sure would be gone when the cleaners swept through here. The sharp scent of alcohol burned in his nose.

“Sapnap.”

He looked up to meet a pair of distinctive, violet eyes.

“Purpled,” Sapnap returned.

Purpled had traded his usual, purple-themed garb for something more discreet. He wore a black coat. He’d turned the hood up to hide his blond hair. His netherite sword gleamed at his hip, the shine hinting to a litany of enchantments. Purpled wasn’t his enemy, but he *was* capable of becoming one, and Sapnap reminded himself of the comfortable weight of his own axe strapped to his back underneath the cloak.

“Did you tell Dream?” Purpled asked, cocking his head to the side in an inquisitive manner.

Sapnap blew air out from his nose. “No,” he admitted.

Purpled gave him an unimpressed look. “You should’ve, man. Because he knows, and he didn’t hear it from you. Instead you came straight here. Now he’s probably pissed.”

Sapnap felt his stomach drop. A year or two ago, he wouldn’t have been afraid of making Dream angry. Now, dread trickled down his spine, ice cold. “Shit,” he swore, raking his hands through his hair. “Who told him?”

Purpled raised a brow. “You’re not the only one paying me.”

Sapnap scowled at him. “Seriously? You couldn’t have told me?”



Purpled rolled his eyes. “You weren’t paying me for that. I’m telling you now because I’m nice. You should run.”

Sapnap shook his head. “I can’t. People rely on me.”

*Do they?*

“Well it’s your life on the line, not mine.” Purpled said with a shrug. “All I know is that I’m getting the hell out of Las Nevadas. I don’t want to be here when Dream comes through. Or when Quackity figures out who sold him out.” Purpled tossed something to Sapnap. He caught it. He looked down. In the palm of his hand sat a key.

“It’s to Quackity’s office,” Purpled told him. “I got a copy made. I figured you might need it. He keeps all the important papers in a safe I don’t have access to.”

Sapnap curled his hand into a fist around the key. “What am I supposed to do with this?”

Purpled shrugged. “I figure you’re gonna stay here, right? Maybe it’ll help to have a snoop around. You never know what could be hiding in there.” For some reason that last comment was funny to Purpled. He snickered a little.

“Thanks?” Sapnap's voice curled up at the end into a question.

Purpled gave him a wave. “Personally I kind of want Dream to kick Quackity’s ass but I know you’re gonna get involved so. You know. Try not to die. See ya.” With that, Purpled turned and strode away. Sapnap watched him go, clutching the key. He turned it over in his hands, studying it. Maybe he *should* have a look around.

---

Sometimes, when he stood in this room alone, Dream felt tempted to sit on the throne. It belonged to him – George was his, so the throne was his. He studied it, face impassive behind his mask. He didn’t know where George had disappeared to. He couldn’t bring himself to be concerned. Puffy should be trailing him. She was capable of handling him.

Without George’s snoring presence, the throne room always felt oddly lonely.

The sound of footsteps made him turn. A pristine, white cloak. A golden chain worn brazenly around his neck. Black boots fit for combat. Punz stopped a few feet away, eyebrow raising in question. “You called?”

Dream’s lips curled up into a smile. “I have a job for you.”

Posting another chapter on a random day because I added a bunch of tags in an attempt to get more traction. I've uploaded fanfiction before on a different account and they've never done this poorly, so I'm a little baffled. Hopefully the extra tags help. If they don't I guess it's my fault for attempting to get something on the DSMP tag noticed that isn't SBI focused or DNF. My bad y'all.

Regardless, I will keep writing because I'm having a good time! Not sure if anyone other than my friends are following new chapters, but don't you worry! There's no way I'm quitting now. Especially because I have 35K words written and I'm, as my lovely friend PJ put it, "balls deep into the story."

Hope you enjoyed! Kudos are appreciated. I will give you a kiss if you comment. Have a lovely day!

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Summary

Niki deals with the fallout of the revolution alone. Sapnap and Quackity have another conversation.

## Chapter Notes

### CHAPTER WARNINGS: mentioned parental death

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Niki remembered the day she had met Wilbur.

She had spent most of her life in the palace. She grew up in the servant's quarters. She worked for hours in the kitchen. She buried her parents there in the palace cemetery. She found friendship, and love, within those walls.

She'd been inside the palace when the previous king had been removed from the throne. She remembered her mom shoving her back into their shared room with hissed instructions to hide under the bed. She remembered the sharp tang of blood as assassins tore through the corridors. Her parents, loyal and foolish, had picked up kitchen knives in defense of their king.

She grew up within those walls, grief and hatred buried deep in her heart. It took an argument with the only person she had remained there for to leave. Niki remembered the way anger had bubbled hot in her chest. Her eyes had stung at the odd feeling of betrayal. She stumbled through the city of L'manberg, pockets empty, and she'd found him by mere chance.

Wilbur had sat outside a tavern which had been closed for the day, strumming his guitar and singing softly. He hadn't been trying to perform, but he'd gathered an audience anyway. She had moved towards him as if in a trance. There had been *something* about his voice. She'd thought it might have been like magic. (Later, she'd find out how right she had been.) After finishing his last song, he had shooed everyone away with a playful cheer. They'd all wandered off to the places they had to be. Niki had nowhere to go.

Wilbur had taken one look at her and known. He'd said, "*Do you want some lunch?*"

Maybe following a strange man hadn't been the wisest choice, but Niki hadn't grown up in the streets. She'd lived a sheltered life in the castle, even after her parents' death. So she

followed him to a small cottage on the outskirts of the city. There, she met a younger brother with blond hair and blue eyes that looked nothing like the older. When she asked, Wilbur had told her that they were brothers through something much stronger than blood – choice.

There, in that rundown, little cottage housing two brothers, she joined a revolution.

---

Baking bread and pastries her whole life hadn't exactly prepared Niki for being on the run from the crown. Something heavy, maybe bitterness, sat in her chest. In the beginning, Wilbur had been all wit and charm. In the end, he'd turned into something mad. And now he was as good as dead.

Wilbur was dead and she was alone again.

Niki wasn't prepared to be a fugitive, but she *did* know food. Her father had a fascination with the forest. She'd wandered through the trees with him while he'd pointed out every edible plant and fungus they passed. She thanked his ghost while she gathered handfuls of wild sweetberries and wrapped them in cloth. Her hair was longer than she liked it, and hung around her face in unwashed clumps. The pink dye had almost entirely faded. She needed a bath, but she had no idea where to go.

Las Nevadas was an option, but she had never fully trusted Quackity. Something about his smile had always felt a little shifty, like he'd throw them all under a horse-drawn carriage if it meant he could get ahead. And even if she *did* trust him, she had no idea how to get there. She had no map, and no means of orienting herself enough to read it even if she did. She had no idea where she was, and she had never traveled before. She needed to find some sort of civilization. She could live off the land until winter came around. The weather had been getting colder as the weeks passed by. Eventually, her time would be up.

With that reality weighing heavy on her shoulders, she kept moving.

---

“Gods,” said Tubbo, wrapping his arms around his middle, “it’s getting fuckin’ freezing.”

Quackity had given them all new winter coats before they left Las Nevadas, telling them they would need them as the weather got colder. They were only a day into the second part of their journey, and it felt as though the air had made an abrupt shift from the last few warm days of summer to fall. It never snowed too heavily in the Dream SMP, but it got cold enough for flakes to drift down from the sky for a few days in the year. Right now, leaves were falling. Their feet crunched through a thin layer of them as they walked. The trees were a myriad of golds and reds and oranges.

“Do you want my cloak?” Ranboo asked. “I’m not that cold.” None of the jackets Quackity found were big enough to fit Ranboo, so he’d offered up a new black cloak to replace his old, tattered one. This one was thick and lined with wool. Ranboo had privately thought that it was kind of itchy, but he’d thanked Quackity for his generosity without complaint. Tubbo’s new jacket was an olive green with a fur-lined hood.

Tommy snorted. “If he wore that thing it’d drag on the ground. He’s too short.”

“Hey!” Tubbo protested. “I’m not *that* short. Ranboo’s just massive.”

“To be honest I think it’s a mix of both,” said Ranboo. “Like yeah, I am massive, but you’re also kind of small.”

Tubbo whined in protest and Tommy pulled his jacket tighter around his shoulders. He’d declined Quackity’s offer, and instead wore the nice one he usually kept shoved to the bottom of his bag. It was dyed a deep red, and with it came a bittersweet sense of familiarity. Wilbur had given it to him.

*“Every man needs a good coat.”*

“Maybe you should zip it shut,” Ranboo was suggesting as Tommy tuned back into the conversation.

“Oh yeah,” said Tubbo. “Probably a good idea.” He zipped his jacket shut.

“How far out are we?” Tommy asked.

“Less than a week if we walk fast,” Tubbo told him.

Tommy’s expression turned grim. “Let’s walk fast then. I want some fuckin’ answers.”

Ranboo and Tubbo exchanged slightly worried glances.

“Sure thing, Big Man,” Tubbo agreed.

---

Sapnap stood in the middle of Quackity’s office, key held loosely in one hand. *What the hell am I doing here*, he wondered.

He didn’t know what he expected to find. Evidence that Quackity had ever cared about him? What a fucking joke. He heaved a heavy sigh and sank down into Quackity’s chair. He kicked his feet up onto the desk and tilted his head back, closing his eyes. He needed to figure out what to tell Dream.

“Ugh,” he said. “Fuck.”

“Yeah,” said a voice, which made him jump so high he practically levitated off the chair. Sapnap looked to the doorway and saw Foolish standing there. He was leaning his shoulder against the wall, arms crossed. “How’d you get in here?”

Sapnap stared at him for a moment, before holding up a key.

“Quackity give that to you?” Foolish asked.

“No,” said Sapnap.

“Oh. Shit. I should probably kick you out.”

“Probably,” Sapnap agreed.

Foolish raised an eyebrow at him. “You know I heard your argument with him.”

Sapnap rolled his eyes. “Yeah, you and the whole fucking city.”

Foolish rolled his own eyes right back at him. “You should try to have an actual functional conversation with him. You know, instead of just screaming at each other.”

Sapnap snorted. “Is he paying you to fix his love life?”

Foolish grinned. His teeth were a tad bit too sharp to be human. This didn’t surprise Sapnap. Nothing about him looked human or even *felt* human. “Nah,” he said. “I’m just super nice like that. I’m telling him you’re in here.”

Sapnap waved him away. “You go do that.”

Foolish disappeared back into the hallway, door to the office clicking shut behind him. A few minutes later it opened again. This time Quackity stood in the doorway with his arms crossed.

“The fuck are you doing in here?” he asked.

Sapnap tossed him the key. Quackity caught it. “Purpled’s your traitor, if you were wondering.” Sapnap told him.

Quackity pinched the bridge of his nose. “I figured. He was gone this morning, and he hates me.”

“He really does,” Sapnap agreed. “How’d you get him to work for you?”

“I found out he crossed the northern border illegally.”

Sapnap barked out a laugh. He took his feet off the desk and planted them heavily on the wooden floor. “Gods, you really *are* an ass.”

Quackity shrugged and walked into the office, shutting the door behind him. His heeled dress shoes clicked against the wooden floorboards. Sapnap watched him approach, with his

rumpled dress shirt and tattered suspenders. He looked the same as always. Sapnap could practically feel Quackity's eyes sliding over him, watching him too. Sapnap wondered, briefly, what he saw.

"You know me," said Quackity, coming to a stop in front of him. Sapnap had to tilt his head back to meet his eyes as he leaned his hip against the desk. "I needed a fighter. I'm not much of one."

Sapnap reached up and brushed his fingers against the scar marring his friend's face. He was reminded, suddenly and violently, of the one that split Dream's face in two. "You never told me how you got this."

Quackity pushed his hand away and leaned back. "I messed with the wrong person."

Just like that, whatever spell Quackity had put on him shattered into pieces. He stood up, making the desk chair screech against the floor. Quackity winced. Sapnap didn't even notice the noise.

"You did that again," Sapnap snapped.

Quackity blinked, surprised at the sudden outburst. "Did what?"

"Messed with the wrong person."

Quackity let out an incredulous laugh. " *You* ?"

Frustration bubbled in Sapnap's chest, hot and heavy. He'd be a problem to Quackity if he didn't care so damn much, and Quackity knew that. "*Dream*." He corrected him.

Quackity's eyes grew huge. He ran a hand through his hair and muttered a curse. "Did you tell him?"

Sapnap shook his head. "Of course not. I knew he'd kill you. But--"

Realization dawned on Quackity's face. "Purpled told him. That's why he wasn't scared of me reporting him."

Sapnap nodded. He made a decision then, one that made his stomach swoop with the weight of it. Whatever Dream had become, he was unreasonable. Sapnap couldn't get through to him. But Quackity was the same as always. He'd been overly ambitious with a fucked up concept of 'helping' since they'd met. Sapnap could work with that. "We need to go."

Surprise made Quackity pause. "We?" he asked.

Sapnap gave him a rather unimpressed look. "I can't leave you alone. You'll either die or try to kill my friends again."

Quackity laughed, the sound light with relief. Then he said, "I can't leave. I'm safer here. Dream can't take on *all* of Las Nevadas."

An old memory of resurfaced in Sapnap's mind. When he, George, and Dream had been young, they'd played a game. He remembered chasing Dream through the woods, through the fields, across rooftops. He'd been practically impossible to catch, and when you finally caught up to him, he'd pull some impossible move to knock them down and keep moving. They recruited more and more friends in an attempt to best him, but he'd just kept winning.

*"You sure you aren't magic?"* Sapnap had asked him breathlessly. Sapnap was good. He knew he was good. Dream was something else entirely.

Dream had just laughed.

They had called the game manhunt.

Quackity saw something in Sapnap's face then. Maybe it was fear, or something close to it, because his own face visibly paled.

"Okay," said Quackity. "Okay. Let's get the fuck out of here, then."

---

Out of all the cities in the Dream SMP, Las Nevadas was Punz's least favorite. It reminded him the most of the Badlands. The lawlessness contributed to this, though it was controlled in a way that the Badlands never was. Mostly it was the weather. The Dream SMP usually had mild seasons, but Las Nevadas existed in a constant drought. The shrubbery and grass dried up and shriveled into nothing. The dirt was so dry it practically became sand. It was as if they were cursed.

This drought was part of the reason Quackity had paid for plumbing to be established practically citywide. Aquifers deep underground allowed the city to have water. It had been the first step towards allowing the city to flourish.

Punz swiped a tongue over chapped lips. Despite the cool fall wind, the dry air had him constantly reaching for his waterskin, if only to wet his cracked lips. His horse trotted along the dusty road. In the distance, he could make out the skyline of the city. He couldn't help but be amazed by the sheer height of the buildings. He still had yet to see anywhere else that had towers that tall. It was as if a god had built them.

Regardless of his feelings about the city, he had a job to do.

*"I need you to go to Las Nevadas,"* Dream had told him. *"Bring back Sapnap and Quackity, even if you have to kill them to do it."*

Punz had paused at that. He didn't have much of a conscience. He couldn't, in his line of work. But he knew Sapnap had been Dream's best friend. He'd seen it.

*"You sure?"* he had asked.



Dream had turned to him then, expression hidden by the mask that Punz was beginning to find rather eerie. He'd tossed him a plump bag of gold coins, and Punz had stopped asking questions.

---

Punz got stopped outside the city gates. On either side of him, the crowd of tourists passed through unhindered, but a fifteen-foot man made of gold stood in his way. On the man's shoulder sat a miniature glob of slime that was vaguely human shaped. The slime gave him a friendly wave as its expression turned into something resembling a smile.

"Hello there!" it said cheerfully. "You are Punz!"

Punz blinked. Beneath him, his horse shifted backwards skittishly. She didn't seem to like the two odd individuals blocking their path. "I am Punz," he agreed. "I'm here on official business of the king." He held up a letter that Dream had given him. It had the royal stamp on the front. As far as he knew, the actual king had never even touched it.

The golden man held out a massive hand. Refusing to be cowed, Punz passed him the letter, face stoic. The golden man put a hand to his chin as he read, frowning in consideration. Then he folded it back up and passed it back to Punz.

"Sorry man," he told Punz. "Quackity and Sapnap already left. They said they had to talk to a specific bakery a few towns over about their wedding cake."

*Wedding cake?*

"What," said Punz, more a noise of confusion than an actual question.

"They're engaged!" the slime informed him helpfully. "Them and Prince Karl from Kinoko Kingdom! The wedding is supposed to be soon! Do you think they'll kiss, Foolish?" The slime poked the golden man's cheek, leaving behind a smudge of goo. The man (Foolish?) seemed remarkably unbothered by this.

"It *is* a wedding, Charlie" said Foolish. "People kiss at weddings."

Charlie found this hilarious for some reason because he started giggling relentlessly.

"Look," said Foolish, ignoring the odd creature on his shoulder. "You're welcome to have a look around, but they're not here."

Punz, feeling completely baffled at this point, just heaved a sigh. "Do you know where they went?"

Foolish shrugged. Charlie yelped and grabbed onto Foolish's shoulder as the motion made him bounce upwards. "No clue. I don't keep track of where the boss goes. I just build and he pays me."

“I think they went North!” said the slime after it recovered its balance. “Or was it West. Maybe South?”

Punz pinched the bridge of his nose. “Great. Can I have a look in Quackity’s office? Maybe he left behind a receipt from the bakery or something.”

“Sure!” Charlie said cheerfully.

Foolish rolled his eyes. “You’ve got to stop just inviting people into the mayor’s office.” He motioned for Punz to follow him. “Come on, I’ll show you.”

As Punz followed the odd duo deeper into the city, another duo snuck out past the city gates behind them, hearts racing from nearly getting caught.

## Chapter End Notes

Niki's backstory in this was the hardest for me to figure out. I needed someone to show that the Dream Team's actions had consequences. I also wanted to give her more depth than just merely serving a plot purpose because I like her character way too much for that. Hopefully it doesn't seem like a throwaway to give her character motivation. I promise I thought about it much more than that.

Hope you guys have a good Sunday! Oh, and happy pride! :D

# Chapter 8

## Chapter Summary

We learn a little bit more about Tommy's past. Sapnap and Quackity are on the road. Dream and George have a chat.

## Chapter Notes

### CHAPTER WARNINGS: mild blood

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy couldn't remember the day he met Tubbo. As far as he knew, he'd always been there. His earliest memories were of running through the streets of L'manberg with him, ducking behind alleyways after stealing freshly baked bread and random trinkets. They were two street kids, keeping each other alive and hopeful. Tubbo had always played innocent well, while Tommy had the quickest fingers. They made a great team.

He'd known Tubbo longer than he'd known Wilbur. He remembered the first day he'd met Wilbur. Tommy had slipped his fingers into a man's pocket only to have his wrist grabbed tightly before he could pull away. Panic had squeezed around his heart. When the man looked down at him, Tommy had realized that he was younger than he'd realized. He'd been expecting to be reported, but Wilbur had only grinned and said, *"I can teach you to do that better."*

And he had. Tommy had thought he'd had quick fingers before he met Wilbur. Under his watchful gaze he felt clumsy and uncoordinated. Wilbur could chat cheerfully with vendors while stealing right under their noses.

*"I'm magic,"* Wilbur had told him when he asked how he did it. *"I can't make people do things they don't want to, but I make them listen. That's all I need."*

Tommy had never seen magic before, and he had been immediately enthralled. He trailed behind him constantly, glittering blue eyes watching his every move. He had wanted to be just like Wilbur, even without the magic. They got along like a house on fire. Despite the difference in age, the admiration wasn't a one-way street. Wilbur found him funny, and every time Tommy made him laugh something warm bloomed in his chest.

One day, Tommy showed up to Wilbur's cabin to see a new bed pushed to the corner of the bedroom. It had been small and rickety, clearly built by someone who barely knew what they were doing, but Wilbur had looked at him and smiled and Tommy never wanted to sleep anywhere else ever again.

*"We can be brothers."*

No one had ever called Tommy family before. He never knew his parents. They had fucked off so early on it was a miracle Tommy survived on his own. Tubbo was his friend; his best and oldest friend, but they'd only ever called each other friend. Later, after learning the nuances behind what made people family, he'd begin to categorize Tubbo as that as well. But in that moment, *Wilbur* had been his only family, and Tommy had been completely done for.

Tubbo had never liked Wilbur much. He stayed in their house sometimes, especially during cold winter nights. He'd wriggle into Tommy's bed and they'd share despite the tight squeeze. But Tubbo remained always a little mistrustful of Wilbur. He wasn't immune to his magic, no one was, but Tubbo had confessed once that it made him uneasy. Tubbo didn't like to be forced to listen. Tommy didn't think it felt like he was being forced. He wondered if it was because he was *choosing* to listen. Wilbur didn't need his magic to make Tommy hang off his every word.

Tommy knew that Tubbo had only joined the revolution because Tommy had. It made him feel guilty these days. He remembered the nights that Tubbo and Wilbur would disappear. When they'd return, they'd have gunpowder staining their hands with a matching gleam in their eyes. Tubbo had always liked solving puzzles. Building explosives became his new, high-risk puzzle.

Tommy didn't know why Wilbur had liked it. Maybe he liked anything that was destructive. Tommy had always been destructive. He shattered plates and set things on fire and Wilbur had just laughed, delighted at the way he seemed to break everything in his path.

So maybe Wilbur had been a little fucked up. Maybe they both were. Some days, Tommy wondered if he was better off without him, but most of the time he just missed him.

---

It'd been a long time since Quackity had traveled. He used to all the time, back before he'd settled down in Las Nevadas and put everything he had into building it from the ground up. He used to take odd jobs, trying to make a quick buck. One of those odd jobs had earned him his scar.

Something to know about traveling long distances – it can be the best or the worst time of your life, depending on who you are traveling with.

Maybe before everything, before the failed revolution and Quackity throwing his weight behind the wrong man, Sapnap would have been a fun companion to travel with. Quackity

could almost picture it, could almost hear the ghost of their banter filling up the time. Maybe Karl would be with them, laughing and laughing at their jokes the way he always did.

Things felt tense now. Things had never been tense with Sapnap before. It made his feathers ruffle, like he was waiting for an invisible threat to come around the corner. Karl had liked his feathers. When Quackity had told him that his wings were useless, that he was one of those avian hybrids who wasn't quite bird enough to fly, Karl had just given him a grin.

*"They're still pretty."*

Quackity had blushed.

He wished he could fly now. Anything would be better than being grounded on a horse next to an angry fiancé. The only thing breaking the silence was the clatter of Quackity's skeletal horse's bones. He'd told Sapnap the horse's name was Boner, expecting to get a laugh. He'd only gotten the barest hint of a smile.

Despite the icy treatment, Sapnap remained by his side. He'd chosen Quackity over Dream. It left him feeling lightheaded with relief, and maybe a little vindicated.

*Told you that you'd be better off without him.*

"So," said Quackity instead of voicing that particular thought, "what's your plan? You joining the revolution or something?"

Sapnap shot Quackity a look that made him want to throw something at him or slide off his horse and bury himself in the dirt in equal parts.

"What?" asked Quackity. "It's a fair question. You've fucked up your relationship with Dream entirely."

"Wow," said Sapnap, voice dripping with sarcasm. "Thanks for reminding me. Every moment I spend with you makes me so happy we're engaged."

"Fuck you," Quackity fired back.

"Not now, maybe later," Sapnap returned, and for a moment Quackity wanted to laugh because *yes*, this was their relationship. They were supposed to be *fun*. But he could tell that Sapnap's heart wasn't in it. He didn't look at Quackity to see his reaction, just stared resolutely forward. Silence fell over them once again. Their horses plodded along.

"He's not the Dream I know," said Sapnap after a few minutes of quiet.

"Huh?" asked Quackity.

Sapnap frowned down at the reins in his hands. "He's changed. I think the power got to his head. Or maybe he was always messed up and I'm only realizing now. Sometimes I see bits of my friend, but I don't know. I can't reason with him. He doesn't listen. He doesn't care. He's cruel and he hurts people and I don't want to help him do that anymore."

“Shit, man,” Quackity breathed. “That fucking sucks.”

Sapnap barked a laugh. “Yeah. It does. I was standing there in your office and I had to make a choice and I chose you because you might be an asshole but at least you haven’t *completely* lost your mind. You’ve always been an ass. That’s just how you are.”

Now it was Quackity’s turn for sarcasm. “Thanks,” he said dryly.

“It’s kind of comforting,” Sapnap admitted. “Everything else in my life can go to shit but I can trust you to stay an asshole.”

“Hey!” Quackity complained, affronted.

“To answer your question,” Sapnap continued, “I’ll help you get Dream out of power and dethrone George, but not by killing them. Especially not George. He’s innocent in all of this. Dream’s just using him.”

Quackity’s face turned grim. “I know,” he said, and there was an apology in that acknowledgement. “I knew it wasn’t right, but it was the best we could do. None of us can beat Dream.”

Sapnap thought back to Dream on his knees, blood running down his face, mask shattered on the floor in front of him. It would have been his end if not for Sapnap’s intervention.

“Luckily for us,” said Sapnap, “I know someone who can.”

---

Dream’s mask sat on the desk next to his sheet of paper. He sat alone in his study, door locked behind him. Punz’s messenger pigeon sat on the windowsill. Its beady eyes stared him down. Pigeons were less intelligent than crows, and you risked losing your mail if you used them, but Dream didn’t trust crows. He hadn’t for a long time. They served someone else.

Dream rested his chin in his hands, almost startling when his fingers came to rest against the bare skin of his cheek instead of his mask. It was odd to be awake with it off. He’d only removed it because the strap that wrapped around his head had felt like it was digging into his temples, contributing to the constant low-level headache he’d been dealing with since Sapnap had run off to Quackity.

A knock on the door made him reach for the mask.

“It’s me,” George’s voice called through the door. Dream paused, hand hovering over the mask.

“Just you?” he asked.

“Just me,” George agreed.

Dream dropped his hand and got to his feet, making his way over to the door. He unlocked it and pulled it open slightly, allowing George to slip inside before closing it behind him and locking it once more.

The king did not look like a king.

His hair was rumpled on one side, as if he'd just woken up from a nap. His eyes were sleepy and unfocused behind his round glasses. He wore no crown, no royal red cloak. Just a simple blue shirt and a pair of dark pants.

"You look tired," George said instead of a greeting, "You should sleep."

Dream shook his head. "I'm not tired." He wasn't lying. Even when he was tired, he didn't register it anymore. He didn't have time to be tired.

"You could be," said George.

George's magic rolled over him like a thick blanket. He swayed, the sudden faux exhaustion making his eyes heavy. He slumped against the wall, fighting the urge to let his eyes close.

"George," Dream slurred. "Too much."

Immediately, the magic retreated, leaving behind a manageable drowsiness that wasn't difficult to resist.

"Sorry," George apologized mildly. "I don't use it on other people much anymore."

Dream straightened up, rubbing his eyes. "It was never that strong before."

"Really?" asked George. "Huh. Maybe I'm powering up."

Dream snorted. "All you do is sleep. Maybe you've been charging." George watched him walk back towards his desk and sink down in his chair with a heavy sigh.

"I sleep because I've got nothing else to do," George told him, face blank. "You do everything."

Dream gave him an odd look. "Do you *want* to do something else?"

George shrugged. "I don't care either way."

What a concept, not caring. Dream couldn't fathom it. He'd always been the type of person to need to have his hands on everything. Lack of control made him feel powerless, and there was nothing he hated more than that.

Dream studied George's face and found nothing. He'd never been the most expressive or involved, but lately there'd been no difference to him whether he was awake or asleep. His presence demanded no attention. His words lacked weight. He seemed to just exist, drifting through his days more away than aware.

Their eyes met, and it felt like looking at a stranger.

Sapnap had abandoned him. George had turned into something empty. The coldness that had taken root in Dream's heart only continued to grow.

Dream twisted in his seat. He picked up a pen and dipped it in ink.

"I have work to do, George."

"Okay," George said mildly. The magic completely dissipated, and the drowsiness faded into a sharp focus. "Find me later. Take a nap."

"Sure," Dream agreed, not really listening. He pressed the tip of his pen down and watched ink bleed into paper.

*Punz. Forget Quackity and Sapnap. I have a new job for you.*

## Chapter End Notes

Me typing "are crows smarter than pigeons" into my Google search bar to make sure my very (un)subtle reference to Philza makes some degree of sense.

This chapter is setting up lots of things! Next chapter Phil and Techno get introduced, and the plot really starts picking up. My motivation to write has kind of fizzled out, but I've got a lot already written so I only have to edit to upload. I'll see you hopefully on Tuesday!



# Chapter 9

## Chapter Summary

The main trio finally reach their destination. Things go wrong, as things tend to do.

## Chapter Notes

### **CHAPTER WARNINGS: descriptions of blood and violence**

Well, I *did* say the plot was finally picking up this chapter! Enjoy! \*cackles madly\*

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The location Quackity had given the trio took them to a pair of small cabins deep in the woods. With no path to lead them through the trees, they had gotten turned around a few times before Ranboo finally spotted smoke in the distance with an excited shout.

The little cabins stood proudly in a clearing. They were connected by a bridge over a small pond. There was a farm behind them growing what seemed to be wheat. Even further back was a large fenced off area where a herd of cows grazed. A small hut stood next to the miniature wheat field.

“I can hear dogs,” said Ranboo, ears twitching at the sound.

Tommy grinned. “Dogs are pretty fuckin’ pog.”

Tommy marched forward, eager to meet the dogs. Tubbo followed closely behind. Ranboo trailed along further back, looking up and turning in a slow circle. In the trees, on the roofs of the houses, in the sky – everywhere he looked, crows stared down at him. Other than the birds, the forest around them was eerily still.

“Guys?” Ranboo called, tail flicking nervously back and forth. “I think something’s up.”

Something sharp resting at the back of his neck made him straighten up, a shock of fear lancing up his spine.

“Ya think?” a deep voice drawled behind him. The blade against Ranboo’s neck pressed harder in a silent warning, not quite deep enough to draw blood, but enough to make him go perfectly still.

“Oh I hate being right,” Ranboo whimpered. To his surprise, the stranger behind him huffed a laugh.

“Are your friends gonna notice your life bein’ threatened or are they just completely oblivious?”

“Um. They’re oblivious. Unless I scream or something. Then they’ll definitely notice. I hope.”

Tommy chose that moment to turn around, grin on his face fading as it turned into something dark and angry. “Hey! Who the fuck are you? Get away from Ranboo, you bitch!”

Tubbo whirled around, eyes widening as he saw what was happening.

“Nah,” the stranger said. “I think I’m good. I live here. I should be asking *you* that question.”

Suddenly, a bird swooped down and landed on Tommy’s head, cawing loudly. Tommy yelped and swatted at it. “What the fuck!?” The bird screamed back at him and batted him in the face with its wings a few times before flying off.

“Oh great,” said the stranger. “It’s *you* .” He lowered the blade he had pressed into Ranboo’s neck, making him sag in relief.

Tommy spat a black feather out of his mouth. “Me?” Tommy asked.

The stranger sighed. “You,” he agreed reluctantly. “You’re Wilbur’s friend, aren’t you?”

---

The stranger, they learned, was named Technoblade. He herded them into his cabin, grumbling about it the entire time. The interior was surprisingly cozy. A fire dwindled in the fireplace. Worn leather couches crowded the sitting area. A ladder upstairs led to what was presumably the bedroom. A small hallway branched off to their right, leading to the kitchen and the bathroom.

Technoblade did not fit with the house.

The most eye-catching detail about him was that he was some kind of pig-related hybrid. Tusks poked out from under his upper lip. His hair was pink and long, braided down his back. Pig’s ears were visible from underneath his hair.

The second most eye-catching detail about Technoblade was his golden crown. It was obviously old. There were dents in the metal. The emeralds attached onto it gleamed as if they were carefully polished, but there was a slot where one was obviously missing. Technoblade had more gold all over. He wore golden rings, had golden hoops pierced through his cartilage in both ears. His red undershirt, revealed when he’d shrugged off a heavy blue cloak, was lined in golden thread.

As he led the trio into his house, Tommy peppered him with questions.

“Why do you have a crown? You some sort of king?”

“No,” Technoblade grunted.

“That’s fuckin’ dumb then. Who just wears a crown?”

“Me.”

“How do you know Wil?”

“I know his dad.”

“Philza? Where is Philza?”

“Not here.”

“Can I meet your dogs?”

“Gods, you’re annoying.”

“I am *not* .”

“You are. You’re like a little raccoon creature that crawled into my garbage.”

“Hey!”

Technoblade sat them all down on the couch. He heaved a sigh as he tossed the last bit of his wood into the fire. He prodded at it with a poker until the fire grew, washing away the fall chill with a rush of warmth.

“I was wonderin’ why Phil let you guys get so close,” Technoblade commented. He hung the poker back up on its stand and put his hands on his back. He stretched backwards with a grunt. “I’m gettin’ too old for this shit and I’m not even old.”

“How would Phil know if we were close?” Tubbo asked, eyes bright with that familiar gleam of curiosity.

A realization dawned on Ranboo then. “The birds,” he said, “they were watching us.”

“Yup,” said Technoblade. He flopped down onto the armchair next to the couch. “The birds are Phil’s.”

“Did he train them?” Tommy asked.

Technoblade laughed for some reason. “No.”

“No?” Tommy asked.

“You’ll see.”

As if on cue, the front door swung open. The three teenagers on the couch twisted around to look. In the doorway stood a man of average height. He wore a green bucket hat and was draped in a green robe. An emerald earring dangled from his ear. A scruffy blond beard took up the lower half of his face. Behind him, they could see a pair of black, massive wings pressed flat against his back like a shadow.

“Oh,” said Tommy. “You’re a crow.”

Philza laughed. His laugh was an odd, hiccupping sound. Something about it was infectious though, because they couldn’t help but smile in return.

“Hello, Tommy,” said Phil with a warm grin. “I’ve heard a lot about you, mate.”

---

Philza, completely horrified that Technoblade hadn’t offered them anything to drink, ushered them into the kitchen. Technoblade followed behind them, rolling his eyes. Phil had his three guests sit at barstools at the counter as he bustled about. Tommy didn’t know the first thing about dads, but even he could recognize that there was something fatherly about Phil. He immediately slipped into a caretaking role, offering them snacks along with their drinks.

“I’m guessing no water for you, mate,” he said, nodding towards Ranboo. “The enderman in you is plain as day.”

“Um, yeah.”

“Have a cookie,” he said, pressing a chocolate chip cookie into Ranboo’s hands instead of a glass. “I made them last night.”

Technoblade slipped past Phil to snatch one of his own out of the jar. “They’re good,” he informed Ranboo as he shoved it in his mouth. He reached for another and Phil smacked his hand away.

“No more until dinner.”

“You’re not my dad.”

“I made them. I say who eats them.”

Technoblade groaned but didn’t reach for another one. He turned and left the kitchen, asking Phil to get him when dinner was ready as he walked away.

“So,” Phil said once they got situated with drinks and a modest plate of cookies. Ranboo nibbled politely on the one already in his hands. Tubbo grabbed one and ate at a normal speed. Tommy began to inhale them. Phil leaned his elbows against the counter to study them. “I know Tommy. And I’m assuming you’re Tubbo?”

“Yup,” said Tubbo around a mouthful of chocolate chip.

He looked towards Ranboo, who quickly looked down to avoid eye contact. “I’m sorry mate, but I don’t think Wilbur ever told me about you.”

“Oh no,” said Ranboo. “I never knew Wilbur. I’m Ranboo.”

Phil nodded. “I see. Well it’s nice to meet you all. Wilbur talked so much about you, Tommy.”

“He talked about me?” Tommy asked, shoving the last of the cookies into his mouth. He had a smear of chocolate on his cheek.

“Well,” said Phil. “He wrote about you. I haven’t seen my son in years, but we exchanged letters pretty regularly.”

“He never told me about you,” Tommy told him. “Not until recently.”

Phil gave him a small smile. “I’m not surprised. Don’t hold that against him. I’m a secret he doesn’t give away lightly.”

“Why?” Tommy asked.

Instead of answering, Phil turned his back on them and began to rummage through his cupboards. “We can talk more after dinner,” said Phil. “I need more wood for the stove. Do you mind going out to get some, Tommy and Ranboo? Tubbo can stay here and help with the prep.”

“Sure?” Ranboo agreed hesitantly. Tommy shot him a scowl. Ranboo shrugged his shoulders back at him.

“There should be some that Techno chopped behind the doghouse.”

That made Tommy spring to his feet. “I’ll go get the dogs! I mean, wood. Come on, Ranboob.”

“Please stop calling me that,” said Ranboo, following him out the kitchen. Phil laughed at the exchange as they left. He seemed to be the type of person who laughed a lot.

---

Phil gave clear and concise instructions about what vegetables to chop and how, which Tubbo was grateful for because he didn’t know shit about cooking. Phil set him up with a chopping board, a knife, some mushrooms, and a careful warning to keep the knife away from his fingers.

When Tubbo asked what they were making, Phil told him it was stew.

Tubbo chopped slowly, but Phil didn't seem to mind as he pulled more ingredients out from the fridge. He seemed lost in his own thoughts.

"Your stove is electric."

"What?" Phil asked, looking up at Tubbo.

Tubbo's shrewd gaze met his. "It's electric. You don't need wood for the stove. It heats up on its own. You have a fridge and you have electricity. Your stove is electric."

Phil let out a surprised laugh. "You *are* clever. Wil always said you were clever."

Tubbo shrugged. "I guess. You don't know what to say to Tommy, do you? Wilbur never told you we were coming."

Phil heaved a sigh. "I haven't heard from him in over a year. My crows told me he was missing. I'm sorry if you lot came looking for him here. I figured Tommy might show up eventually."

"I'm not looking for him. I think he's dead," Tubbo told him.

Phil fumbled with a bag of carrots and accidentally knocked over an abandoned glass of water on the counter. It tipped over onto the floor and shattered, spilling water and shards of glass all over the kitchen tile.

Phil inhaled sharply. "Please don't talk like that," he said, voice quiet.

The familiar sting of awkward guilt made Tubbo wince. "Sorry. I'm not very tactful."

Phil laughed at that. "It's alright, mate. Help me clean this up."

They bent down armed with towels in an attempt to clean up. Technoblade appeared in the doorway, eyebrows arched in an expression of concern.

"You alright, Phil?"

"I'm good, Techno," said Phil, waving him off.

"Tommy is still looking," said Tubbo while they mopped up the mess. "If it makes you feel better. He's always had this weird sixth sense when it comes to Wilbur."

"I hope he's right then." Phil's voice was cheerful, but even Tubbo caught the wavering note of grief in his words.

Suddenly, Phil straightened, eyes widening.

"What?" asked Tubbo, watching him warily.

"They're here."

---

Tommy made a beeline straight for the doghouse. Ranboo followed behind somewhat reluctantly. He liked dogs, but it was starting to get dark out, and this forest filled with birds made the hair on the back of his neck stand up. He knew they were friendly, but the feeling of hundreds of eyes on him made his skin crawl. He got the idea that he'd never liked being the center of attention.

Tommy opened the door, and a flood of what seemed like thousands of dogs barreled out at them. Tommy let out a cheerful cry as they knocked him over, barking and slobbering all over him. A few approached Ranboo much more respectfully, gently licking his hands. Luckily, dog saliva didn't burn the way water did, so he crouched down to give them some pets.

Some of the dogs brought them toys, so they spent a few minutes playing fetch with them. Then Tommy refilled their water bowls as Ranboo herded them back into the doghouse. Despite their excitement to meet new friends, they were remarkably obedient and listened with little protest.

"Dogs are so cool," said Tommy, wiping dog slobber off his face with his sleeve.

Ranboo grinned at him. "They are," he agreed.

With his dog meeting successfully completed, Tommy trotted towards the back of the doghouse to grab an armful of logs for the fire.

The crows in the trees began cawing loudly. They took off into the sky, swarming into in a black cloud, before dispersing back into the forest.

"Awesome," Ranboo muttered. "That's not menacing at all."

"Hey Ranboob!" Tommy called by the pile of wood. "Come help me carry this shit!"

Ranboo sighed. He opened his mouth to offer up his obligatory complaint about the nickname, but before he could say anything, pain ripped through his calf and up his leg. A scream tore from his throat as he crumpled to the ground. He curled in on himself, hands groping desperately to find the source of the pain. His fingers found something wet. It didn't burn like water. Blood? His hand curled around a crossbow bolt lodged in his calf. The pain only got worse, searing hot and turning his leg leaden. Getting shot shouldn't hurt this much, a distant part of his mind reminded him. This was bad. This was very, very bad. Another distant part of his mind registered Tommy shouting his name, Tommy's hands on his shoulders, trying to figure out what the problem was. The only thing Ranboo could focus on was the agony. He turned his face and panted out sobs into the dirt, tears streaking burning tracks down his cheeks.

"Don't try anything, unless you want to end up like your friend on the ground."

Tommy looked up from Ranboo. Standing in front of them was a blond man with a golden chain around his neck, crossbow aimed directly at him. Tommy pulled Ranboo closer to him and bared his teeth in a snarl.

“Get the fuck away from us!”

“Sorry,” said the man. “I can’t do that. I’ve got a job to do. Dream sent me, and he pays well.”

Something primal awoke in Ranboo at the mention of Dream. Something like fear. It cut through the agony, ringing as clear as bells.

*Run!*

He scrambled desperately to his feet despite the injury. He made it about two steps before someone else slammed into him, knocking him back down to the ground. He squirmed frantically. A knee pressed down hard onto his back, making him wheeze with every panicked breath. A hand gripped his hair cruelly and forced his face into the ground. His clawed fingers scrabbled in the dirt. He let out a keening, warbling cry.

“Oh fuck this!” Tommy yelled, lunging for the man who was holding the crossbow. Tommy had the element of surprise to his advantage, but the man’s reflexes were quick. He deftly avoided Tommy’s knife and grabbed him by the outstretched wrist, twisting until Tommy was forced to let go of his weapon with a pained shout.

“Sorry kid,” said the man, face grim. Tommy kicked at him. The man dropped his crossbow onto the grass and wrenched Tommy’s arm behind his back, forcing him to his knees. “Stop,” he said, holding him there with one hand on his arm and the other fisting into the collar of his shirt. “Don’t make me dislocate your shoulder.” He tugged warningly, and the sudden rush of white-hot pain made tears spring to Tommy’s eyes.

“Stop!” Tommy yelped. Luckily, his attacker didn’t seem to be a big believer in causing unnecessary pain, because he listened.

“Don’t try anything and you’ll be fine.”

“Yeah right,” Tommy snapped. “I know who you are.”

And he did, actually. Wilbur had told him about the mercenary who did Dream’s dirty work.

“You’re Punz.”

“You got it in one,” said Punz, tightening his grip on Tommy slightly. Tommy looked over to where Ranboo was still struggling desperately against the figure holding him down with panicked, inhuman noises.

“Just let my friend go,” Tommy pleaded. “He’s got nothing to do with the revolution. He’s innocent.”



“That might have worked if he didn’t look so unusual,” Punz told him. “Sorry, but Ranboo’s on my list too.”

*Fuck! Teleport! Do something!* Tommy wanted to scream at him.

“Don’t worry,” said Punz. “We can calm him down so he doesn’t hurt himself.”

“*You’re* the one who hurt him!” Tommy yelled.

“Try the word, Sam,” Punz told the other man, ignoring Tommy. “The one that Dream gave us.”

The man leaned forward to whisper in Ranboo’s ear.

*“Smile.”*

Ranboo went limp as his whole world went black.

## Chapter End Notes

I promise I was totally planning on updating yesterday, but I had to read a whole book from start to finish for school and then I went live and between those two things I could not find the time to edit, so here we are!

This might be a bit of an obvious spoiler for things to come, but I'll let those of you observant enough to spot it have it. Ranboo told a lie in this chapter, even though he doesn't realize it. Unreliable narrators are so fun!

I'm not totally satisfied with this chapter but I have to go write a whole essay on that book I read now so it'll have to do. For the next chapter I will continue to ruin their lives! We're finally getting to the real Angst in the Angst and Humor tag. Have a good day everyone!

## End Notes

Hey there! You made it to the end! Thanks for reading :)

I'm planning on updating around twice a week. You can expect updates every Tuesday and another update probably on Sundays unless I'm having a busy weekend.

If you wanna chat with me about this fic (or DSMP in general), come hang out in my [Twitch](#) chat. I'm planning on streaming every Tuesday (and some Sundays) a few hours after updating, so that's the perfect time to grab me if you want to discuss new chapters! You can also follow me on [Twitter](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!